

**SPECIAL
ISSUE**

COLLEGE FOOTBALL PREVIEW

THE TOP 5: 1. ALABAMA → 2. OHIO STATE → 3. BOISE STATE → 4. MIAMI → 5. FLORIDA

SEE A DIFFERENT GAME

**YOUNG YANKS
CANO, HUGHES
& SWISHER
HAVE THEIR
SAY**

SportingNews

MAGAZINE

BAMA BONANZA

**THE TIDE HAVE IT ALL:
BEST TEAM, BEST PLAYER,
BEST COACH**

Heisman Trophy winner Mark Ingram with Tide mascot Big Al

www.sportingnews.com

Week of August 16, 2010

+ 5 REASONS ALABAMA-
FLORIDA IS THE NEW
OHIO STATE-MICHIGAN

→ 30 PEOPLE WHO
WILL SHAPE THE
CONFERENCE RACES

→ 77 PREDICTIONS—
ALL OF THEM RIGHT ON
(WE THINK)

**CAN PETE CARROLL'S
USC MODEL WORK
IN THE NFL?**

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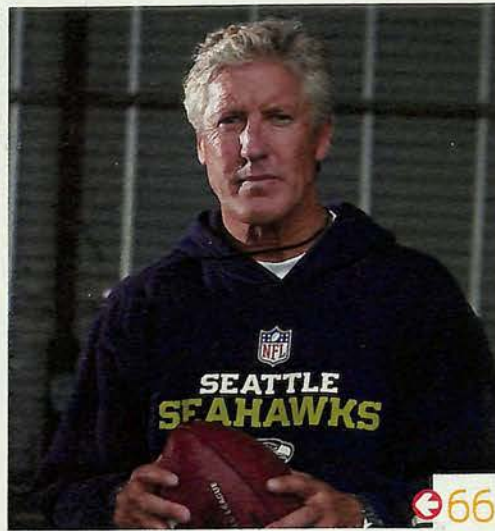
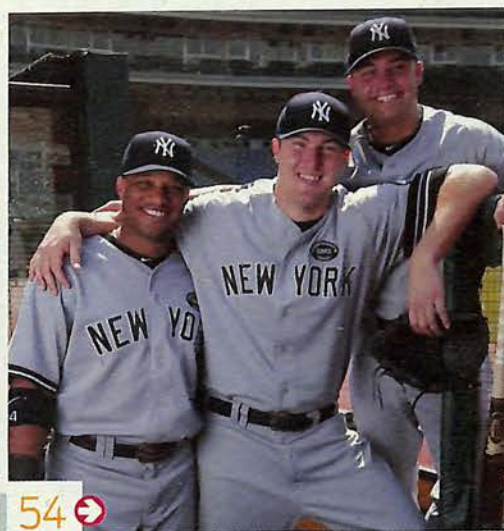


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COVER

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A new game
in town

SN's college football preview offers five reasons Florida-Alabama is the sport's marquee rivalry. "We could play them in a preseason game with nothing on the line," Gators center Mike Pouncey says, "and it would mean everything." Plus, conference breakdowns and trending topics.

COVER PHOTOGRAPHY BY
BOB LEVERONE / SN

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48 COLLEGE BASKETBALL: 34 things we learned on the recruiting circuit
SN offers an inside look into the hectic summer tour of college coaches searching for the next hardwood prodigies. "What better way to make a living than traveling around watching guys play?" USC coach Kevin O'Neill says. — BY MIKE DECOURCY

54 SN CONVERSATION: Robinson Cano, Phil Hughes and Nick Swisher
The Yankees are being recharged by a trio of emerging stars who want to add to the club's storied history. "I think all of us want to be here," Hughes says. "It's just a matter of if we can continue to play well enough to where we're wanted here." — BY STEVE GREENBERG

66 NFL: Wash. Rinse. Re-Pete.

After sustained dominance at USC, Pete Carroll hopes he has learned a few things that will aid his NFL comeback: "I'm more confident, more sure of how I feel about stuff. That's what's made all the difference." — BY DENNIS DILLON

72 NFL FANTASY: SN's top 200

Our Fantasy Source experts rank the top players in a handy draft-day guide, complete with tips from the pros: "Watch out for Anquan (Boldin)," new Ravens teammate Terrell Suggs says. "He is hungry right now and anxious to get back to the Pro Bowl."

PHOTOS

60 BASEBALL: Here today, here to stay

The Braves' Martin Prado is one of many new faces among the majors' statistical leaders. "To see him hit the ground running like he has makes me sit back and smile," teammate Tim Hudson says. "He could have been doing this two or three years ago." — BY STAN MCNEAL

SportingNews
MAGAZINE

A JETS-COWBOYS
SUPER BOWL?

Find out why we think the Jets are ready to take the next step, who the best coaches are and which new quarterbacks will get it right this season. Plus, previews for all 32 teams, all-division squads, correspondent polls and more.

NFL
PREVIEW

MULTIMEDIA

SportingNews
TODAY

Attention, armchair G.M.s: Get daily fantasy football and baseball pointers in the world's most comprehensive sports section.

SportingNews
.COM

The new SN 100 is out. Follow the top football prospects' every move between now and signing day in The Recruitnik blog.

SportingNews
YEARBOOKS

Coming soon to our online store: SN's hockey yearbook, which includes Craig Custance's surprise Cup pick. (It's not the Blackhawks.)

**COLD AS THE
ROCKIES**

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IN PICTURES



Not all endorsements are created equal. For instance, Giants pitcher Tim Lincecum signed with Red Bull and got wings and the ability to levitate. (OK, actually he just celebrated in a wind tunnel at L.A.'s Universal CityWalk.)



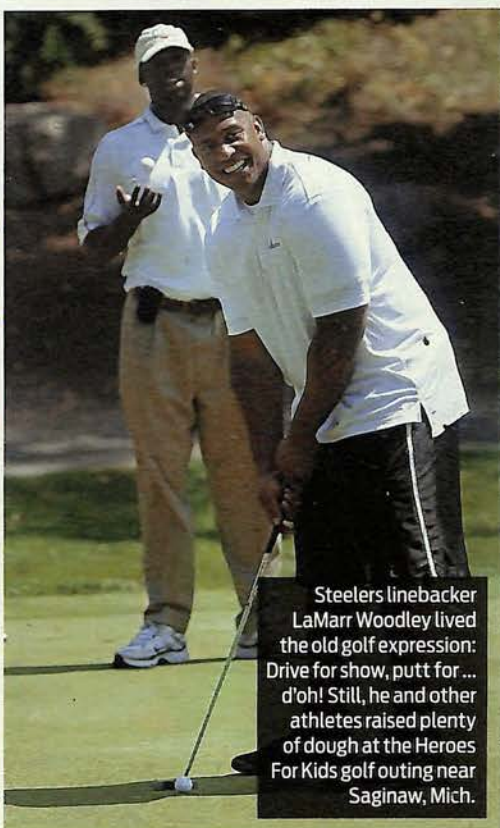
First lady Michelle Obama enlisted the help of Rays starter David Price at a Baltimore baseball clinic. The big lefty—Price, that is—pitched in on the "Let's Move" campaign.



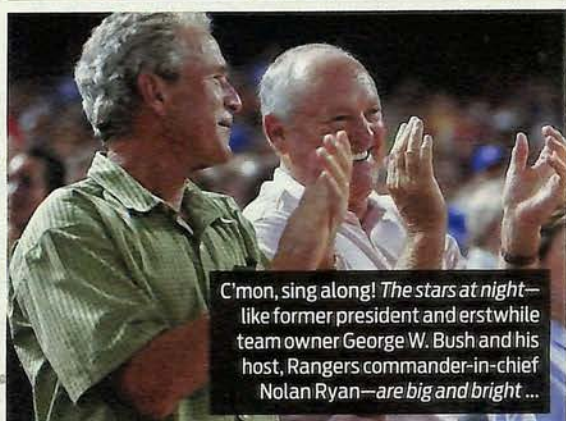
OK, see, Thunder draft pick Cole Aldrich is already contributing. The big man faced up to a youth camper in Norman, Okla.



Raise your hand if you're surprised the Heat's Chris Bosh found himself on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange. After all, he did recently come into a little cash he may be looking to invest.



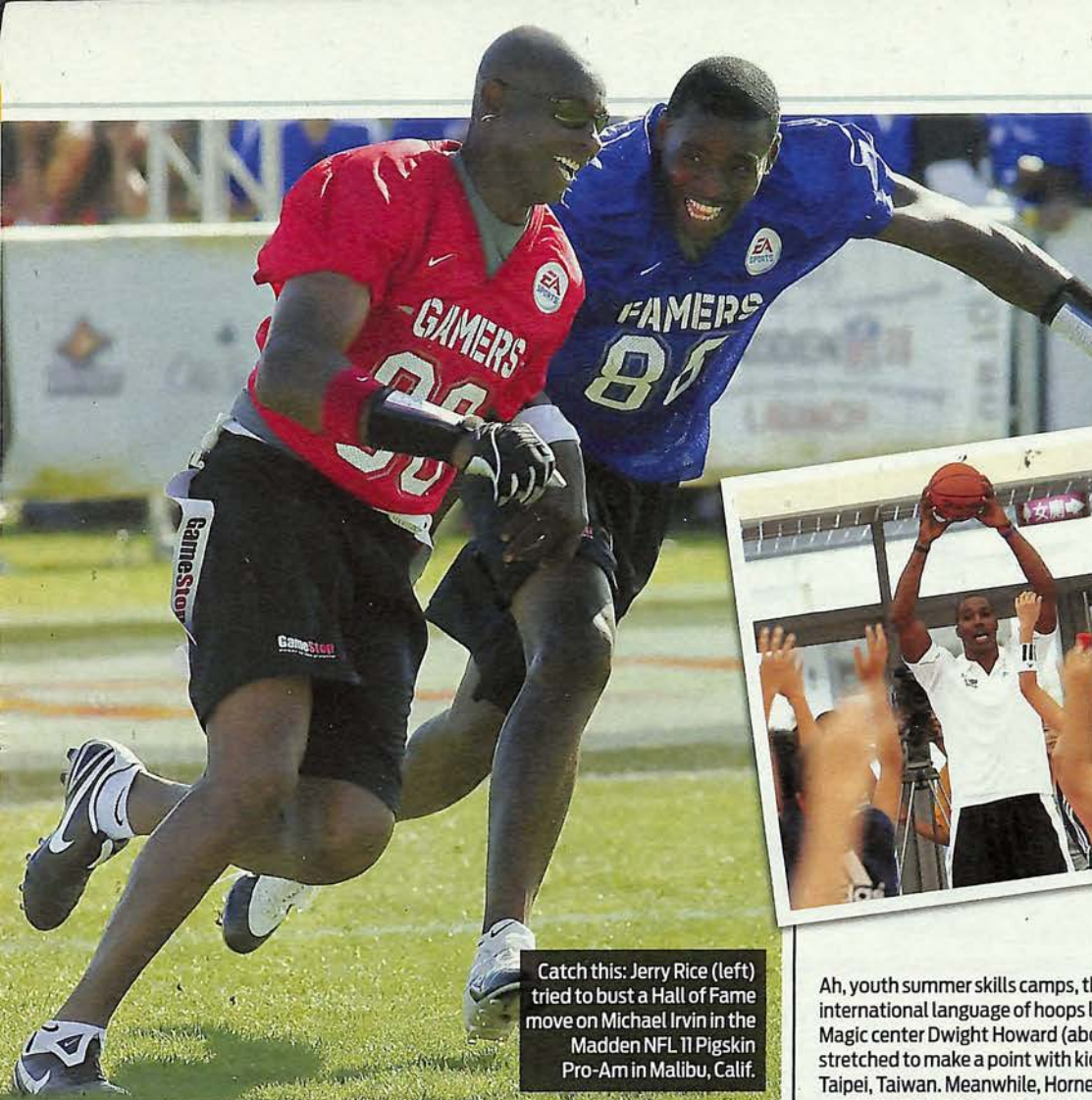
Steelers linebacker LaMarr Woodley lived the old golf expression: Drive for show, putt for ... d'oh! Still, he and other athletes raised plenty of dough at the Heroes For Kids golf outing near Saginaw, Mich.



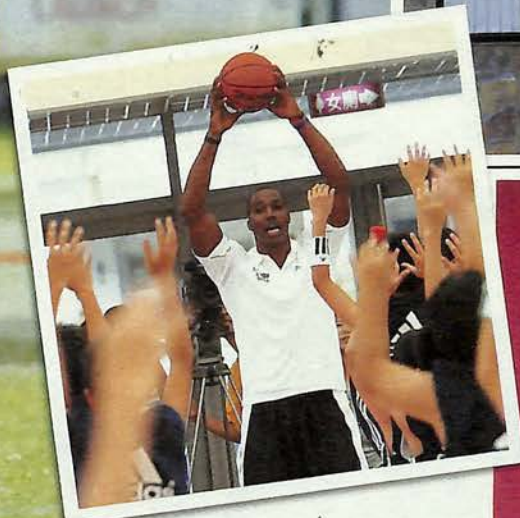
C'mon, sing along! The stars at night—like former president and erstwhile team owner George W. Bush and his host, Rangers commander-in-chief Nolan Ryan—are big and bright ...



Albert Pujols hit a home run on his first appearance with David Letterman—literally. He went yard on 53rd Street off guest pitcher Denis Leary.



Catch this: Jerry Rice (left) tried to bust a Hall of Fame move on Michael Irvin in the Madden NFL 11 Pigskin Pro-Am in Malibu, Calif.

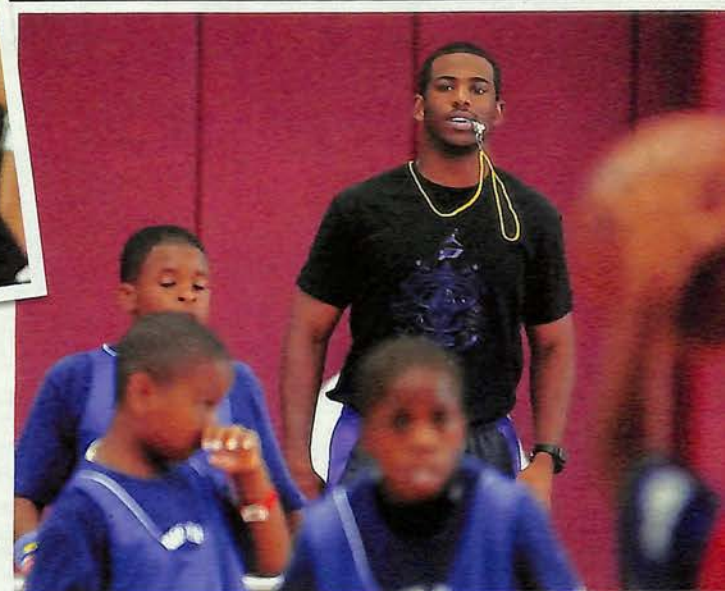


Ah, youth summer skills camps, the international language of hoops love. Magic center Dwight Howard (above) stretched to make a point with kids in Taipei, Taiwan. Meanwhile, Hornets guard Chris Paul (right) whistled while he worked in New Orleans.

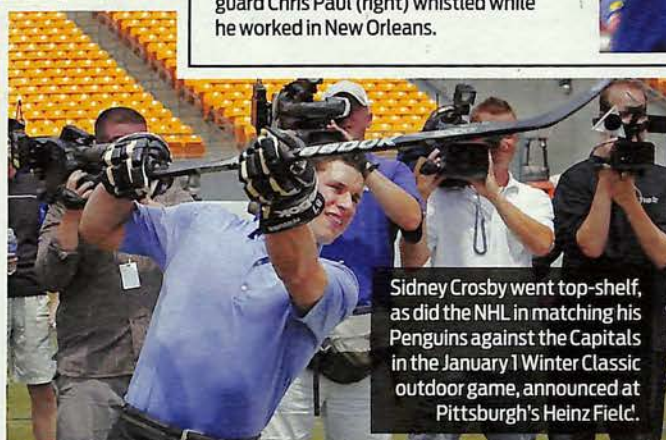
Pizza Ranch

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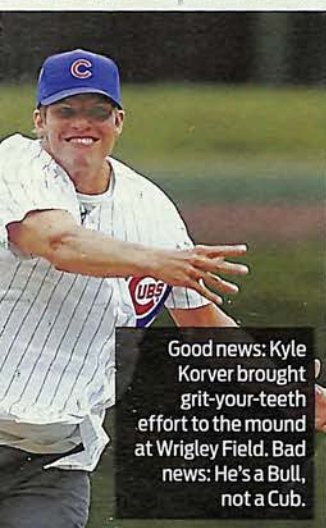
A Mankato, Minn., restaurant may have to eat its words because, y'know, a retiree on a fixed income is always looking for a real meal deal.



That's Nedu Ndukwe of the Bengals (left) and Joe Thomas of the Browns in butter at the Ohio State Fair, where you've gotta believe they churn out farm-fresh sculptures.



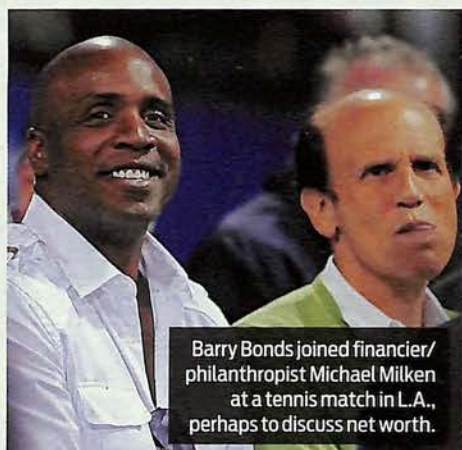
Sidney Crosby went top-shelf, as did the NHL in matching his Penguins against the Capitals in the January 1 Winter Classic outdoor game, announced at Pittsburgh's Heinz Field.



Good news: Kyle Korver brought grit-your-teeth effort to the mound at Wrigley Field. Bad news: He's a Bull, not a Cub.



Football met football as Ray Lewis and Manchester City goalie Stuart Taylor shared a friendly moment at Ravens camp.



Barry Bonds joined financier/philanthropist Michael Milken at a tennis match in L.A., perhaps to discuss net worth.



Padres Wookiee, er, rookie Ryan Webb wears the Yoda backpack that's as much a part of San Diego's Jedi Knight-like bullpen success as closer Heath Bell.



SINCE YOU ASKED ...

You have questions, they have answers

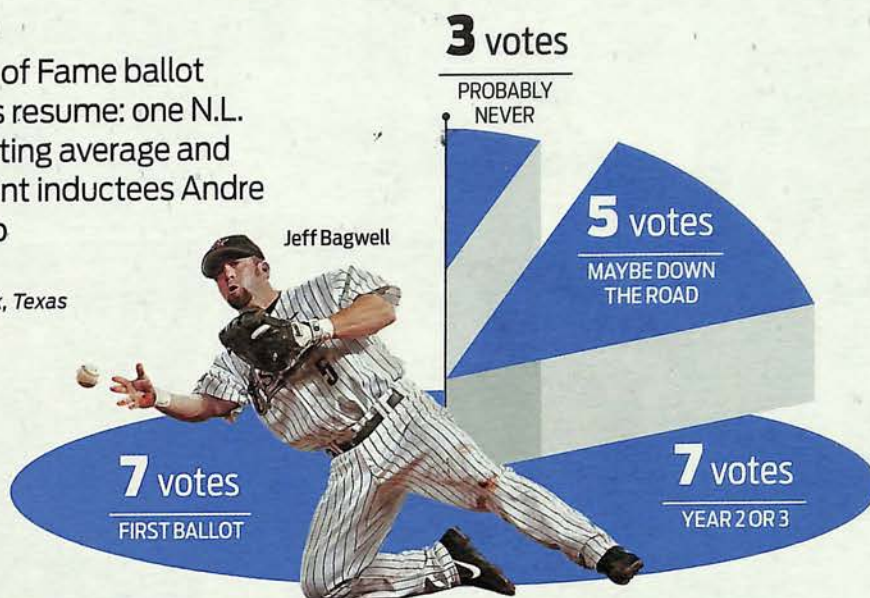
YOUR QUESTION

Jeff Bagwell goes on the Hall of Fame ballot for the first time next year. His resume: one N.L. MVP award, .297 lifetime batting average and 449 homers—more than recent inductees Andre Dawson and Jim Rice. How do Hall voters look at him?

— BUTCH MURPHY, Galena Park, Texas

THEIR ANSWERS

Butch, *Sporting News* asked 22 Hall voters when Bagwell would make their ballots.



Q My 14-year-old grandson is a 6-5—and growing—basketball center who can't make a free throw to save his life. I'm thinking about suggesting that he try shooting underhanded, like Rick Barry used to do at about a 90 percent clip. Is it easier?

— RUSS SLOAN, Chicago

A: Rick Barry, Hall of Famer
Russ,

It's a much softer shot, you will not get any major clangers off the rim, and you'll have a chance for shots that are a little bit off-line to still bounce softly and go in the basket. You're also doing it with two arms, in a natural position, so you will not be tense and tight, especially later in the game. You'll have outstanding control of the basketball.

The most important element is to learn how to put your hands on the ball properly—and be instructed properly—which is not the easiest thing in the world to teach. However, if you work at it—and you're willing to put the time and the effort in—you can improve. I had a teammate who went from a 40 percent free throw shooter all the way to 80 percent.

Good luck.

Q When it comes to a potential 2011 NFL lockout, most fans just see it as greedy owners vs. greedy players. Are players concerned that if the league goes away for a whole season, many fans might be so turned off that they might not come back?

— DREW NEWTON, Berea, Ohio

A: Carson Palmer, Bengals quarterback
Drew,

I think most players are also fans of the league and would hate not only to lose out on a season of playing but also the entertainment value the season brings. I'm concerned about a shrinking fan base if we turn too many fans off with a lost season. I would understand it from the fans' point of view.

You have wealthy owners and rich players who can't come to an agreement, and as fans, you lose out on fantasy football leagues, *Monday Night Football*, *Sunday Night Football* and the playoffs. Most of my fall's entertainment is surrounded by NFL events, and I'm not even talking about my job obligations. We would all hate to lose out on an entire year of NFL.

Q Only in baseball do the managers have to wear actual uniforms. Would they rather dress like coaches in other sports, or do they get a kick out of dressing like the players do?

— BOBBY BUCKLEY, Oxnard, Calif.

A: Manny Acta, Indians manager
Bobby,

I actually like it a lot. We are unique. I would feel weird having to go out to argue a play wearing jeans, a sports coat and a fedora hat.



Acta doesn't need—or want—to be all GQ when he takes to the diamond.

YOUR QUESTION



The Canadian network TSN and *The Globe and Mail* just did an interesting NHL expansion-related series titled "Why not Canada?" I say, "Why not Seattle?" We'd definitely support hockey here. If NHL players had a vote, where would they place an expansion team?

— PETER BECK, Seattle

Peter,

Sporting News took your question to four NHL players.

THEIR ANSWERS



ROB SCUDERI
Kings

Quebec City is beautiful and has a ravenous passion for hockey. I went to a game in the Coliseum in '91 and despite the Nordiques' having a losing record at the time, the game was 90 percent full, the atmosphere electric. The NHL could take a shot at another city, but considering we have a few organizations already in trouble, another team in Canada would have the best chance of long-term success.



BRAD BOYES
Blues

I would like to see another team in the Toronto area, possibly in Vaughan. They have both the population to support another team and the passion for hockey.



BROOKS LAICH
Capitals

I played for the Seattle Thunderbirds WHL team for two years and had a great time. The fans were awesome, the sport is growing at the grassroots level in that area, and I think an NHL team would be great there. Plus, the city itself is fantastic.



MATT CULLEN
Wild

If you were to ask most NHLers, the answer would probably be Las Vegas. Fun place to play on the road, and it would be good for the league.

Write us

Got something you'd like to ask a player, coach or executive, past or present? E-mail your question to jdalessio@sportingnews.com, along with your name and hometown. We'll choose our favorites and get them answered every issue in this space.

15 things you don't know about me

BRET BIELEMA

Wisconsin football coach

4



1. I could watch *Midnight Run* over and over.

2. Laziness is the most annoying thing in the world to me.

3. I'll cook anything on a grill. During the season, I have the same two buddies from Madison over after my radio show. I'll make a couple, three steaks, and we'll watch college football. It's a lot of fun.

4. I've been to over a dozen Bruce Springsteen concerts. I'm a huge fan. My favorite song: "My Hometown."

5. I'm anti-playoff in college football. Former Iowa coach Hayden Fry used to say, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it." It isn't.

6. When I was 19, I got a tattoo of the Iowa Hawkeye on my calf. Seemed like a good idea back then—I could never

see myself being the head coach at Wisconsin. I've had plenty of offers to get it removed, but I always tell my players you have to be proud of where you came from, you know?

7. Some of my coaches are in the Facebook phase. Not me.

8. I was in National Honor Society in high school. I have a marketing degree and always thought that was what I was going to do—commercials or something along those lines.

9. I read *Maxim*.

10. I grew up on a little nine-hole golf course and try to get out as much as I can in June and July. My game needs improvement, but I love to golf and fish. That's where I went

this summer—deep-sea fishing in Cudjoe Key, about 20 miles from Key West.

11. Lambeau Field still gives me goosebumps.

12. I'm getting better at it, but when I first started I was very superstitious. When we get on a roll, I still always wear the same tie, same socks.

13. I can't get enough of *The Office* and that dry humor.

14. Vince Young is the best player I've ever coached against. I was at Kansas State (as co-defensive coordinator); he was a freshman. We didn't even know who he was, but when he came in for the starter, he ran the option for about 200 yards in three series.

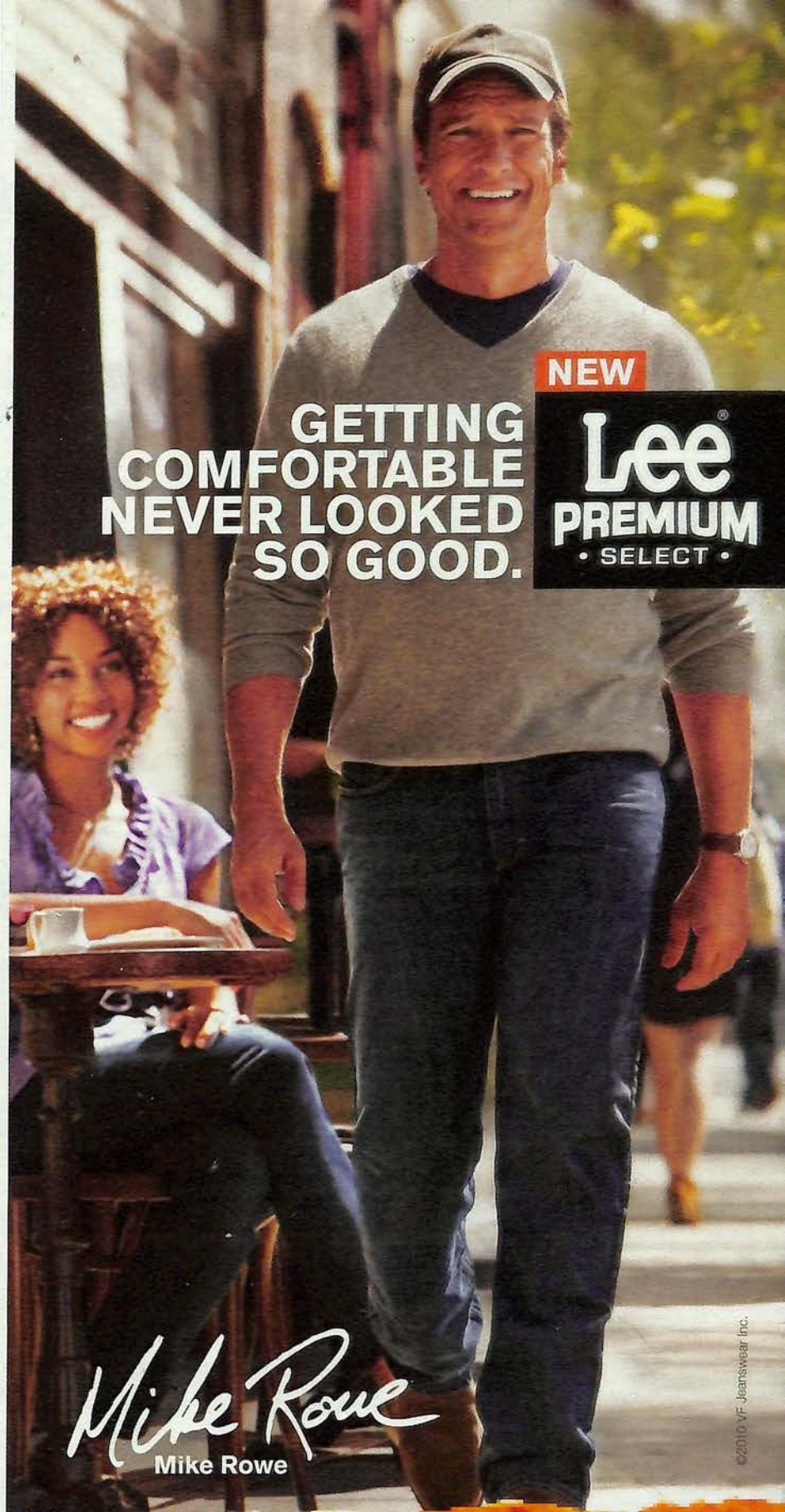
15. One of the first things I say when I come into the locker room before games is, "Everybody ready to have some fun today?" We all play this game to have fun.

— As told to Jeff D'Alessio

11



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WITH EVERY AGE COMES RESPONSIBILITY. IMPORTANT SAFETY INFORMATION BELOW.

We know that no medicine is for everyone. Don't take VIAGRA if you take nitrates, often prescribed for chest pain, as this may cause a sudden unsafe drop in blood pressure.

Talk with your doctor first. Make sure your heart is healthy enough to have sex. If you have chest pain, nausea, or other discomforts during sex, seek medical help right away.

In the rare event of an erection lasting more than four hours, seek immediate medical help to avoid long-term injury.

In rare instances, men who take PDE5 inhibitors (oral erectile dysfunction medicines, including VIAGRA) reported a sudden decrease or loss of vision, or sudden decrease or loss of hearing. It is not possible to determine whether these events are related directly to these medicines or to other factors. If you experience any of these symptoms, stop taking PDE5 inhibitors, including VIAGRA, and call a doctor right away.

The most common side effects of VIAGRA are headache, facial flushing, and upset stomach. Less common are bluish or blurred vision, or being sensitive to light. These may occur for a brief time.

STOP MAKING FOR EXCUSES. DO THE THINGS MEN

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So if you're like millions of men who have some degree of erectile dysfunction (ED), talk to your doctor about VIAGRA. It's America's most prescribed ED treatment. VIAGRA can work in 30 to 60 minutes and, for some men, in as little as 14 minutes.*

For more information go to viagra.com or call 1-888-484-2472 (1-888-4VIAGRA).

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VIAGRA does not protect against sexually transmitted diseases including HIV.

Take VIAGRA about one hour before you want to have sex. VIAGRA works for 4 hours. VIAGRA only works with stimulation. Please see Important Facts for VIAGRA on the following page or visit viagra.com for full prescribing information.

*Data taken from a study of 228 men with ED who previously had success with VIAGRA. Of the 115 men who took VIAGRA 100mg, 35% had erections hard enough for successful intercourse at 14 minutes, and 51% of men at 20 minutes. Individual results may vary.

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IMPORTANT FACTS

VIAGRA®
(sildenafil citrate) tablets

(vi-AG-rah)

IMPORTANT SAFETY INFORMATION ABOUT VIAGRA

Never take VIAGRA if you take any medicines with nitrates. This includes nitroglycerin. Your blood pressure could drop quickly. It could fall to an unsafe or life-threatening level.

ABOUT ERECTILE DYSFUNCTION (ED)

Erectile dysfunction means a man cannot get or keep an erection. Health problems, injury, or side effects of drugs may cause ED. The cause may not be known.

ABOUT VIAGRA

VIAGRA is used to treat ED in men. When you want to have sex, VIAGRA can help you get and keep an erection when you are sexually excited. You cannot get an erection just by taking the pill. Only your doctor can prescribe VIAGRA.

VIAGRA does not cure ED.

VIAGRA does not protect you or your partner from STDs (sexually transmitted diseases) or HIV. You will need to use a condom.

VIAGRA is not a hormone or an aphrodisiac.

WHO IS VIAGRA FOR?

Who should take VIAGRA?

Men who have ED and whose heart is healthy enough for sex.

Who should NOT take VIAGRA?

- If you ever take medicines with nitrates:
 - Medicines that treat chest pain (angina), such as nitroglycerin or isosorbide mononitrate or dinitrate
- If you use some street drugs, such as "poppers" (amyl nitrate or nitrite)
- If you are allergic to anything in the VIAGRA tablet

BEFORE YOU START VIAGRA

Tell your doctor if you have or ever had:

- Heart attack, abnormal heartbeats, or stroke
- Heart problems, such as heart failure, chest pain, or aortic valve narrowing
- Low or high blood pressure
- Severe vision loss
- An eye condition called retinitis pigmentosa
- Kidney or liver problems
- Blood problems, such as sickle cell anemia or leukemia
- A deformed penis, Peyronie's disease, or an erection that lasted more than 4 hours
- Stomach ulcers or any kind of bleeding problems

Tell your doctor about all your medicines. Include over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, and herbal products. Tell your doctor if you take or use:

- Medicines called alpha-blockers to treat high blood pressure or prostate problems. Your blood pressure could suddenly get too low. You could get dizzy or faint. Your doctor may start you on a lower dose of VIAGRA.
- Medicines called protease inhibitors for HIV. Your doctor may prescribe a 25 mg dose. Your doctor may limit VIAGRA to 25 mg in a 48-hour period.
- Other methods to cause erections. These include pills, injections, implants, or pumps.
- A medicine called REVATIO. VIAGRA should not be used with REVATIO as REVATIO contains sildenafil, the same medicine found in VIAGRA.

POSSIBLE SIDE EFFECTS OF VIAGRA

Side effects are mostly mild to moderate. They usually go away after a few hours. Some of these are more likely to happen with higher doses.

The most common side effects are:

- Headache
- Feeling flushed
- Upset stomach

Less common side effects are:

- Trouble telling blue and green apart or seeing a blue tinge on things
- Eyes being more sensitive to light
- Blurred vision

Rarely, a small number of men taking VIAGRA have reported these serious events:

- Having an erection that lasts more than 4 hours. If the erection is not treated right away, long-term loss of potency could occur.
- Sudden decrease or loss of sight in one or both eyes. We do not know if these events are caused by VIAGRA and medicines like it or caused by other factors. They may be caused by conditions like high blood pressure or diabetes. If you have sudden vision changes, stop using VIAGRA and all medicines like it. Call your doctor right away.
- Sudden decrease or loss of hearing. We do not know if these events are caused by VIAGRA and medicines like it or caused by other factors. If you have sudden hearing changes, stop using VIAGRA and all medicines like it. Call your doctor right away.
- Heart attack, stroke, irregular heartbeats, and death. We do not know whether these events are caused by VIAGRA or caused by other factors. Most of these happened in men who already had heart problems.

If you have any of these problems, stop VIAGRA. Call your doctor right away.

HOW TO TAKE VIAGRA

Do:

- Take VIAGRA only the way your doctor tells you. VIAGRA comes in 25 mg, 50 mg, and 100 mg tablets. Your doctor will tell you how much to take.
- If you are over 65 or have serious liver or kidney problems, your doctor may start you at the lowest dose (25 mg).
- Take VIAGRA about 1 hour before you want to have sex. VIAGRA starts to work in about 30 minutes when you are sexually excited. VIAGRA lasts up to 4 hours.

Don't:

- Do not take VIAGRA more than once a day.
- Do not take more VIAGRA than your doctor tells you. If you think you need more VIAGRA, talk with your doctor.
- Do not start or stop any other medicines before checking with your doctor.

NEED MORE INFORMATION?

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- Go to www.viagra.com or call (888) 4*VIAGRA (484-2472).

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WILL'S WORLD

Rainbows and smiley faces season

College football isn't half bad; in fact, it's 58.333 percent good



*Will Leitch is the author of four books, including **Are We Winning? Fathers and Sons in the New Golden Age of Baseball**. He is the founding editor of **Deadspin** and a contributing editor at **New York magazine**. Get more of his opinions at leitch.tumblr.com.*

The writer Chuck Klosterman once theorized why soccer was so popular among American kids, or, more accurately, their parents. He wrote that parents love soccer because the sport allows their coddled, overfed children to run around for two hours without anyone having any idea whether they were playing well. There is no potential for embarrassment, no striking out with the bases loaded, no missing the game-winning jump shot. Parents don't need to worry about their children being humiliated in public. In youth soccer, not everyone wins, but no one really loses.

This is how I feel about college football. It has become the sport in which everybody gets to play an inning. This isn't necessarily a criticism. Sports has enough of a "championship or die" mentality. I know there will be a playoff system someday, and when there is, we'll all be relieved that big-time college football has joined the ranks of every other organized activity on earth. Until then: I like that in today's college football it's difficult to be an unhappy fan.

College football has a very clear pecking order. You have your upper tier—Florida, Alabama, Texas, Ohio State, Oklahoma and so on. These teams are expected to compete every year for a national championship, or at least the current version of one. And then there is everyone else. Sometimes a team can drop a level because of scandal (USC) or temporary implosion (Michigan), and sometimes someone can hop up a level for a year or two (Boise State, TCU). But generally speaking, every team knows its place in the world. Every team knows whether it is among college football's elite. The rest are just sort of playing for fun.

Which is fine because we have a system set up for that very thing. This year, there are a record 35 bowls. *Thirty-five!* (The Pinstripe Bowl, at Yankee Stadium, is the newest, but I'm fond of the Beef 'O' Brady's Bowl St. Petersburg, myself.) There are 120 Division I-A teams; 70 will be



Marshall was happy with the way its 2009 season ended. Even if it did happen in Detroit.

rewarded at the end of the season. Some will be disappointed they didn't go to better bowls. Some will be happy they ended up in a warmer climate than Detroit. But 58.333 percent will do *something*. See? Everyone plays an inning!

There are exceptions, of course. My Illini have somehow made it to only three bowls in 15 years. But this is the exception that proves the rule: If Illinois makes it to a bowl this season, even the bowl in Detroit, this year will be considered a smashing success. Even if it wins only six games and goes 2-6 in the Big Ten. That's rigging the race, and you know what? That's fine. It's like a grade school where no one gets letter grades; everyone gets rainbows and smiley faces.

College football is as coddled as our sports world gets. There are no stakes. There are no downsides. There is just endless postseason. Maybe someday a playoff will change this, but I doubt it. They'll find a way to keep all these bowls alive and everyone's self-esteem high. Being a fan of a college football team is easy because there is no real heartache or heartbreak. No season is a disaster unless you miss a bowl, and even then odds are you'll be back next year. (My sympathy for you is low, Michigan.) College football is a big hug. College football is youth league soccer. Nobody wants the kids crying on the way home.

Bold, daring predictions

1 In my visit to Pittsburgh's PNC Park this month—with SN reader Christopher Mully and my father—I will get a kick out of walking across the Andy Warhol Bridge to watch a baseball game. Andy Warhol would have loved that.

2 Though you hate the Heat and what LeBron James did to Cleveland, you will secretly circle every date they're visiting within 25 miles of you.



Watching LeBron and supporting LeBron aren't the same things. Are they?

3 My wife is a Georgia grad, and she's always trying to get me to Athens for a game. Unfortunately, the only time my schedule allows is when the Bulldogs play Idaho State in November. Not exactly a marquee matchup. But does it matter? E-mail me at will@deadspin.com and tell me your thoughts on just how much the importance of a college football game affects how much fun you actually have at it.

People of the Fortnight

Mark Cuban. Count me among those disappointed that the Dallas Mavericks owner was unable to buy the Texas Rangers. No organization could use a rabble-rouser more than Major League Baseball, with the possible exception of the United Nations. It came down to a midnight auction between Cuban and Nolan Ryan, and Ryan won. I like to imagine Cuban being defeated the same way Ryan defeated Robin Ventura.



Joe Paterno. Almost everyone who saw JoePa at the Big Ten media days says that, for the first time, he finally looks a little old. I suspect I will start looking "a little old" long before I turn 83 like JoePa. I wish these were Biblical times so he could coach until he was 928.

SURVEY SAYS ...

It has been five years since they had a top 10 draft pick, eight years since they claimed an outright conference championship, nine years since they won it all.

But there are signs that Randy Shannon's Miami Hurricanes could be on the cusp of becoming the big, bad U again.

With a defense that would make Ray Lewis proud, college football's team of the '80s enters the season No. 4 in *Sporting News*' top 25 and is our pick to win its first ACC title.

SN caught up with 48 former Canes for a discussion about playmaking quarterback Jacory Harris, the draft drought and more.

SN's panel

Jessie Armstead
Andy Baratta
John Barlow
Jon Beason
Tom Beier
Martin Bibla
Don Bosseler
Fred Brown
Phillip Buchanon
Calais Campbell
Jim Chaitas
Bernard Clark
Ryan Clement
Mark Cooper
Jim Cox
Don Curtright
Ken Dorsey
Bo Dunn
Tony Fitzpatrick
Tavares Gooden
Bill Hawkins
Ted Hendricks
Glenn Hill
Chuck Hirschman
Carlos Huerta
Chris T. Jones
Larry LaPointe
Damione Lewis
Greg Mark
Jason Marucci
Jerome McDougle
Brian Monroe
Dan Morgan
Jack Novak
Jarrett Payton
Kenny Phillips
Alfredo Roberts
Antrel Rolle
Mike Rumph
Dan Sileo
Darrin Smith
Don Smith
Dave Stewart
Bob Taylor
Jonathan Vilma
Gregg Wallick
Steve Walsh
Eric Winston

Will Jacory Harris be a Heisman Trophy finalist at some point in his final two seasons?

→ Maybe	19
→ Yes	18
→ No	11

THEY SAID IT

"UM quarterbacks are judged by one thing—winning." — **Ken Dorsey**

"Jacory is the most exciting QB I have ever seen. I have not seen his equal as an every play game-changer." — **Bill Hawkins**

"I never know which Jacory Harris will show up for the game." — **Glenn Hill**

"He threw for a lot of yards last year (ACC-best 3,352), but he also led the league in interceptions (17)." — **Kenny Phillips**

"He is good but not Heisman-good."

— **Dave Stewart**

Did you ever think you'd see a day when Miami would go two straight years without a first-round draft pick?

→ No	33
→ Yes	15

THEY SAID IT

"Never." — **Eric Winston**

"I didn't think we would ever go one year without having a first-round pick. But I'll tell you this: It will not be a consistent theme."

— **Jerome McDougle**

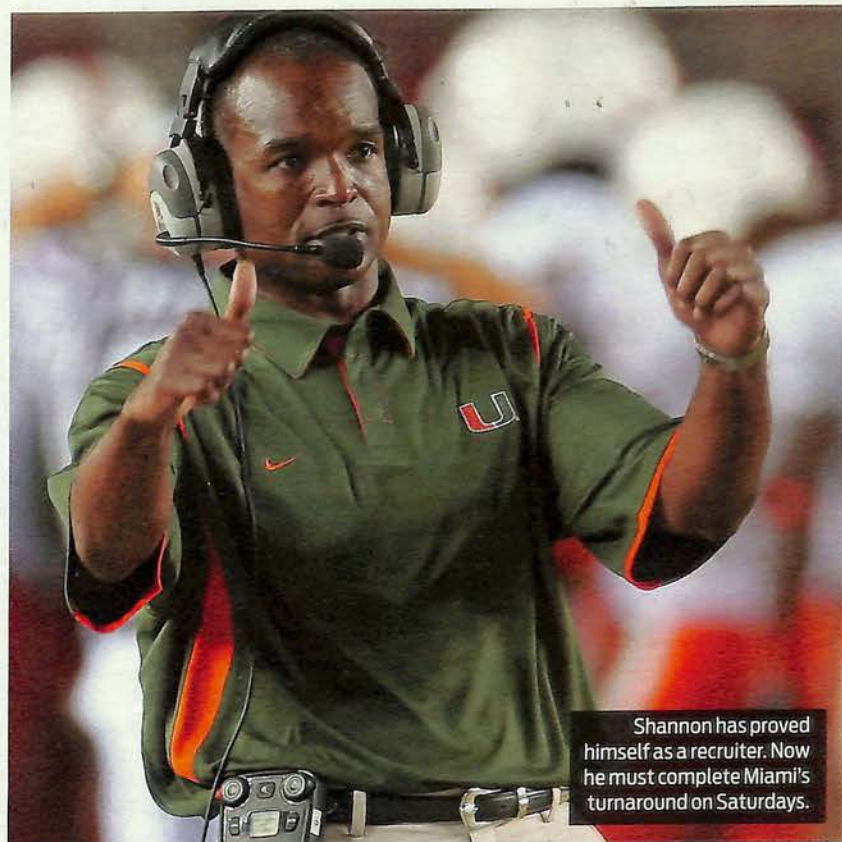
"If you're asking me the same question in two years, then there is cause for concern." — **Steve Walsh**

"Larry Coker was a dynasty killer."

— **Dan Sileo**

"I'd take our couple years down and 25 years of greatness compared to some people having three or four good years and a 25-year drought. Example: Florida." — **Brian Monroe**

Harris may be good, but opinion is split on whether he's "Heisman-good."



Shannon has proved himself as a recruiter. Now he must complete Miami's turnaround on Saturdays.

Should Miami and Florida start an annual series?

→ Yes	43
→ No	5

THEY SAID IT

"We love Gator meat down south."

— **Chris T. Jones**

"Bring it on." — **Jessie Armstead**

"I was brainwashed immediately after arriving on campus. 'Beat the 'Noles! Hate the Gators!' It's a crime they don't play."

— **Greg Mark**

"Once every five years is not cool at all."

— **Calais Campbell**

"Don't just play us when we aren't as good; they need to play us every year in the battle for the Florida cup." — **Tavares Gooden**

"Florida's Big Three should all get a chance to see who runs Florida." — **Jarrett Payton**

"Are they afraid of us?" — **Bo Dunn**

Can Randy Shannon get UM back into national championship contention?

→ Yes	30
→ Not yet sure	16
→ No	2

THEY SAID IT

"They should pay him like (Nick) Saban. Then the expectations won't be any less than what Alabama expects from Nick."

— **Ryan Clement**

"From 2007-09, our record has improved every year. This is a big year for Randy and his staff because people are getting impatient and want to see a national championship."

— **Dan Morgan**

"I'm 50-50. He needs more big-time game experience, then maybe." — **Carlos Huerta**

"If there is a guy who's capable of doing it, it's Coach Shannon." — **Antrel Rolle**

"He can recruit, for sure. Coaching? Not sure." — **Jim Chaitas**

"Yes ... but you need to have the players take the same approach." — **Phillip Buchanon**

"You need to pay up for good coordinators and assistant coaches. So unless the U finds a big sugar daddy, it's going to be very difficult."

— **Tom Beier**

If Miami were invited to the SEC, would you be for the move?

→ No	25
→ Yes	20
→ I'm indifferent	3

THEY SAID IT

"SEC? We haven't made a dent in the ACC."

— **Don Curtright**

"Honestly, I'd like to see us go back to being an independent. Go out and play Texas, play SC, play Ohio State, play who we want."

— **Jon Beason**

"Miami has always wanted to be in the SEC; the issue has been that the SEC doesn't want Miami. Would you want to play Miami every year? They can make you look very bad."

— **Don Smith**

"I want to go where the competition is—and beat them up." — **Jonathan Vilma**

"It wouldn't be the same unless FSU followed." — **Jason Marucci**

"I am not in favor of the trend toward megaconferences. It is not good for the game."

— **Ted Hendricks**

— **Jeff D'Alessio**

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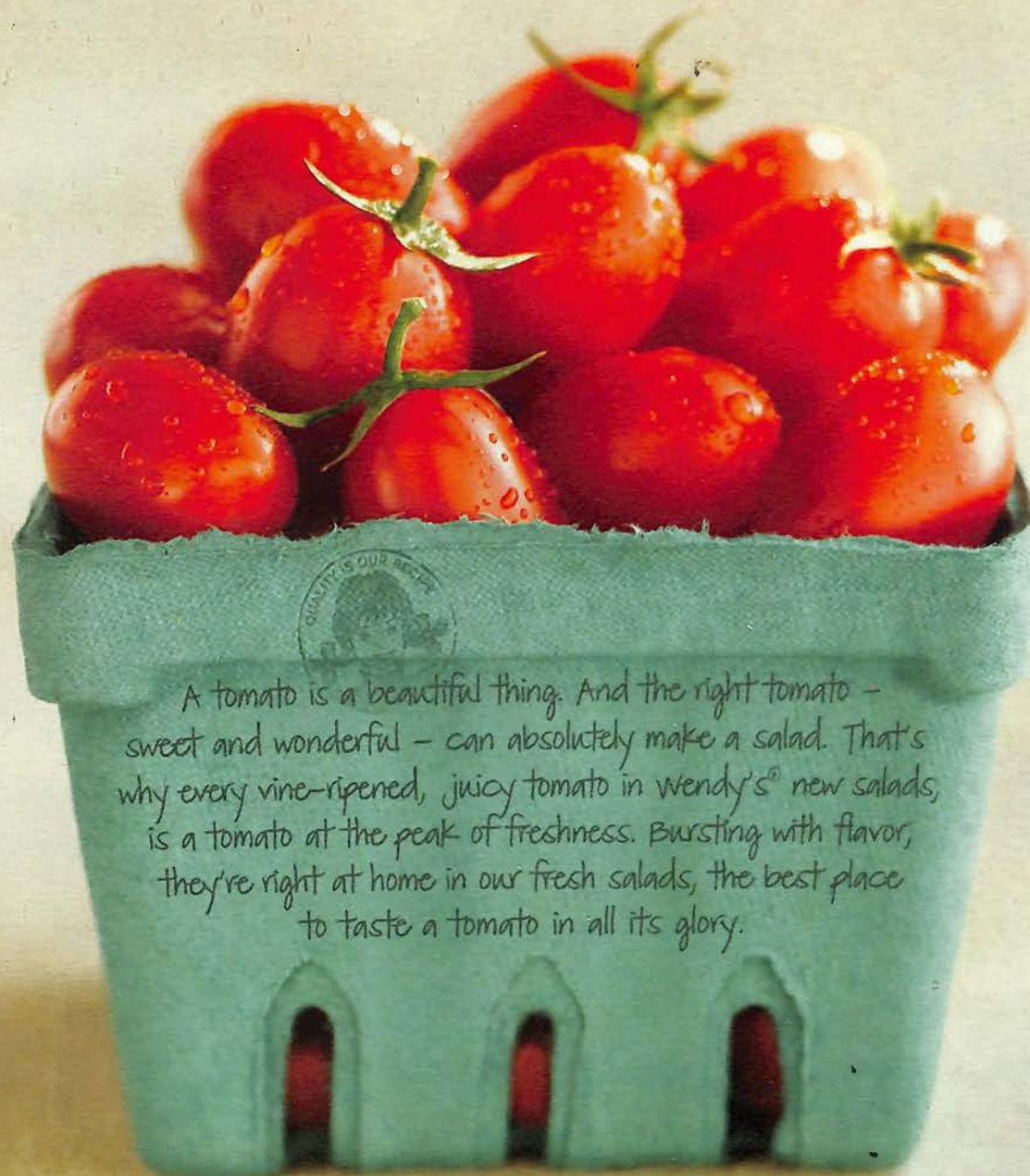
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MY PROFILE

(What you won't find on Facebook ... even if you are approved as a friend)



Josh Cribbs Browns' Pro Bowl kick returner

- ◊ **Born:** June 9, 1983, in Washington, D.C.
- ◊ **Status:** Married
- ◊ **Alma mater:** Kent State
- ◊ **What's on TV:** *The Office*, *Family Guy*, *Law & Order: Special Victims Unit*, *Celebrity Apprentice*, *House*, *The Amazing Race*
- ◊ **What's in my iPod:** Jay-Z, Lil Wayne, Jadakiss, Jamie Foxx, Anthony Hamilton, Jazmine Sullivan, Lauryn Hill, Tank, Jagged Edge. I like all hip-hop and R&B.
- ◊ **What I'm reading:** *The Book of Proverbs*, the Bible; *The Screwtape Letters*, by C.S. Lewis
- ◊ **What I drive:** 2010 black BMW X6 with red interior, 1996 blue SS Impala, 2009 Range Rover Sport, 2007 black Infiniti QX56
- ◊ **Favorite flicks:** *The Matrix* because I believe that I am the one. I also like *300* because it's a motivational movie to overcome the odds. It inspired me to learn how to catch punts in the NFL. I used to be so nervous when I was getting ready to catch punts, I would yell, "This is Sparta!" Also, *The Notebook* is the second movie that made me cry—next to *The Lion King*.
- ◊ **Magazine subscriptions:** *Sporting News*, *ESPN The Magazine*, *Moves*, *Vibe*, *Essence*
- ◊ **Bookmarks:** 2centsme.com, clevelandbrowns.com, nfl.com, twitter.com/joshcribbs16
- ◊ **Worst habit:** Leaving my clothes by the bed and all around the house
- ◊ **Love to trade places for a day with ...** President Obama. I want to have that BBQ on the front lawn of the White House.

- ◊ **First job:** In the 10th grade I worked at Burger King for a year. I was on the burger board and made Whoppers.
- ◊ **Talent I'd most like to have:** To play the piano
- ◊ **For dinner:** Chicken parmesan and anything my wife cooks
- ◊ **Favorite athlete to watch in another sport:** I like to watch LeBron James because he is so young and has so much talent. He is way beyond his years, and his play inspires me.
- ◊ **Favorite city to visit:** Las Vegas. There's always something to do.
- ◊ **Favorite team as a kid:** Washington Redskins
- ◊ **Favorite value in others:** Passion. I like to see people work hard.
- ◊ **Favorite physical attribute about myself:** My chest
- ◊ **And least ...** Also my chest because I have asthma
- ◊ **Dream date:** Rosario Dawson. I liked her in *Men in Black II*.
- ◊ **My greatest love:** My children
- ◊ **My bucket list:** 1. Skydive, 2. Base jump, 3. Visit Egypt and the pyramids
- ◊ **My mottos:** I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. And, leggo my Eggo!

—Jeff D'Alessio

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5 QUESTIONS FOR KENDRICK PERKINS



When Kendrick Perkins went down with a knee injury early in Game 6 of the NBA Finals, the Celtics' chances of claiming the franchise's 18th title took a huge hit. Surgery to repair the torn ACL in his right knee followed the Lakers' eventual championship, and rehab likely will keep the 6-10, 280-pound defensive stalwart out until February. Perkins took a break from rehab to answer questions from *Sporting News* readers.

Q • You have perfected one of the best game faces in the history of sports. Are you just as intense off the court? Do you intimidate waiters in restaurants?

Dan Matarese, Warwick, R.I.

PERKINS: (Laughs.) Nah, I wouldn't do that. I use my kindness there. Actually, I'm probably the friendliest guy in the world off the court. Once I step on the court, I've got to put my game face on. When you're playing with a guy like (Kevin Garnett), you don't have a choice, really, but to come in and be serious all the time. Once I'm off the court, people say I'm just a teddy bear. I'm pretty cool. I'm pretty much a happy guy. I'm never mad.

Q • Perk, it was heartbreaking to see you go down in Game 6. How are you preparing to rehab yourself—not only physically but emotionally and mentally—so you're able to make an immediate impact when you return?

Sarah Winslow, Cape Cod, Mass.

PERKINS: Missing that Game 7 after getting hurt was the hardest thing for me—not physically but mentally, you know? I feel like you don't get those opportunities much, and it was a special opportunity, too, with the rivalry between the Celtics and Lakers. I'm taking it one day at a time as far as my knee and my rehab. I'm not trying to do too much. I'm trying to progress day-by-day. Mentally, I'm all right. I feel I have a chance to really tone up my body and get in great shape before I come back. And once I come back in February, I feel like I need to come back better than ever.

Q • At Kentucky, Rajon Rondo was decent but didn't give us a hint that he would be this good at the top level of basketball. You see him every night, at every practice—how good do you think he can be?

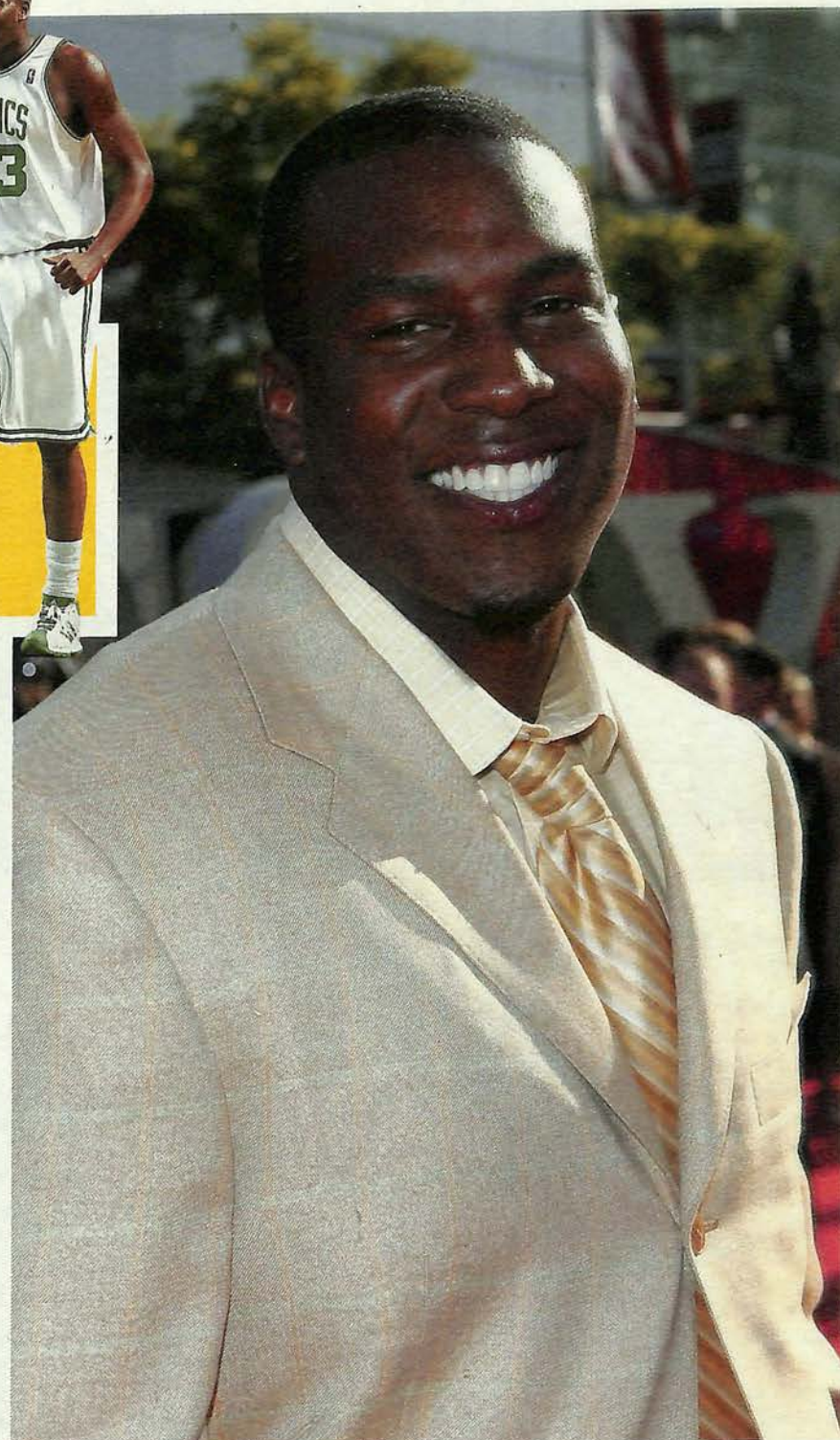
Justin Wells, Louisville, Ky.

PERKINS: He's great. You know, certain guys can't play in college. Rondo needed what the NBA has; it's a more fast-paced game, and he has the ball in his hands. When Rondo first came, he was kind of stubborn in a way. Me and him became good friends, best friends, and I've watched him grow quite a bit. He became a hard worker, and it's paid off for him. I think the biggest thing is that the Big Three sacrificed. K.G., Paul (Pierce) and Ray (Allen), they sacrificed and let Rondo kind of take charge while they took a back seat. I think that was very key this year.

Q • Without giving away too many of your secrets, what makes you more effective than everybody else in the league at defending Dwight Howard?

Kevin Conway, Bedford, Mass.

PERKINS: You've got to have heart. You can't come into the game thinking, *Oh, I've got to guard Dwight Howard—it's going to be a challenge.* I think it's all mental. When you come into the game, you need to come in with the mindset that you're the best player on the floor. You can't be scared playing this game; you can't be scared to take on challenges. The physical part of it is you've got to be ready to go to war. Dwight is a banger inside, and you've got to try and make him score over the top. You'll get a lot accomplished on the defensive side if you make him score over the top.



Q • You're an excellent defensive player who exemplifies Celtics pride. Why is it, though, that after all these years—and after hearing Tommy Heinsohn say it so many times—you still bring the ball down after a rebound or pass before shooting it?

Harry Pantazopoulos, Somerville, Mass.

PERKINS: A lot of that comes from trying to go up with all my strength, to go up powerful. But that's something I'm going to work on in the offseason, going up quick with it without having to take that dribble. Pretty much everybody has flaws in their game; the key is to just clean them up and try to get better. Each year you want to keep getting better at something, and that's one of my priorities going into the season.

— Ryan Fagan

PERKINS (ACTION): ELSA / GETTY IMAGES; PERKINS: ALBERTO E. RODRIGUEZ / GETTY IMAGES

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REPORT

➤ The Miami Heat are holding back about 6,000 season tickets to create pent-up demand and target a wider fan base.

The team plans to sell the remaining tickets on a variable-pricing schedule, increasing prices for high-demand games. The goal is to increase revenue



LeBron
James



Chris
Bosh



Dwyane
Wade

by taking advantage of the interest created by the free-agent signings of **LeBron James**, **Chris Bosh** and **Dwyane Wade**.

➤ Boston Celtics forward **Kevin Garnett** is leaving Adidas for a multimillion-dollar deal with Chinese footwear and apparel company Anta.

➤ Charlotte-based Mirrus has developed technology that can broadcast advertising through bathroom mirrors. The mirrors are being installed in a handful of college football stadiums—including those of Arizona State, Georgia Tech, Virginia Tech and East Carolina—and will be up and running this season.

➤ Nike's sponsorship obligations to athletes and teams over the lifetime of their contracts fell by 9.5 percent to \$3.8 billion in the company's last fiscal year, according to recent filings. Previously, the amount had risen in three consecutive years.

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A.J. Smith,
San Diego Chargers

➤ **I can't live without ...** My morning coffee and the walk to the end of my driveway for my newspaper. When I'm on the road, I miss the routine.

➤ **The best thing about my job is**

... The chase for the championship. I love the chase. I love the competitiveness of it all.

➤ **The player I'd choose if starting a franchise from scratch is ...** Philip Rivers.

➤ **I knew I wanted to be a G.M. when ...** I was with the Buffalo Bills in the late '90s and I started to think it might be possible. The Steelers and Saints had expressed interest in me, and other league sources said I was being considered. After that, the idea of building a championship team became a very powerful thought.

➤ **For relaxation ...** I like to spend time with my wife, Sue, our dog and our kids when they're around. I also like to relax by the pool and read.

➤ **The player I'd deal for, no matter the price, is ...** Joe Montana.

➤ **The worst job I ever had was ...** Loading and unloading trailer trucks from 4 p.m. to midnight. I was 17 and spent the summer with a bunch of real hard-nosed characters. I heard more about life during that time than any 17-year-old needed to know. Too much information.

— Jeff D'Alessio

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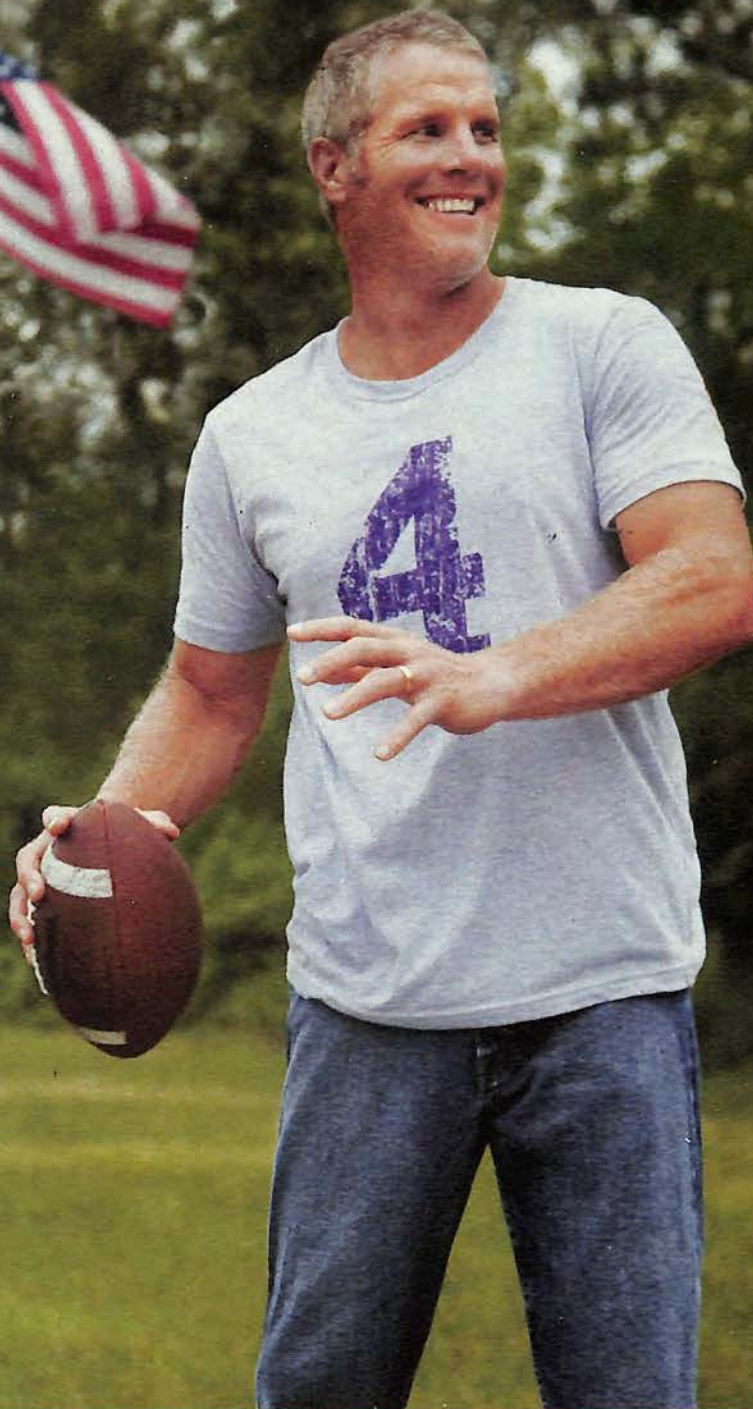
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A NEW GAME IN TOWN

With all due respect to Michigan-Ohio State and Texas-Oklahoma, college football has a new premier rivalry. With its bad blood and national title ramifications, there will be nothing bigger than Alabama-Florida—for a long, long time.

He tried to play the diplomat, deftly dancing around the answer and avoiding the reality of the situation. Alabama has a new most important game on the schedule.

And so does the rest of college football. "The Florida game," Crimson Tide coach Nick Saban says, "is important because of where the two teams have been the last couple of years."

And where they're headed for the next decade. Move over, Texas-Oklahoma. Step aside, Michigan-Ohio State and Florida State-Miami and any other rivalry game of the previous decade.

"We thought about Florida from Day 1 last year," Alabama quarterback Greg McElroy says.

Look, any self-respecting, dyed-in-the-houndstooth wool Alabama fan knows the season begins and ends with beating that cow school across the state. But for the first time in just about ever, Auburn and the Iron Bowl—the most bitter, all-consuming rivalry in the sport—no longer is the be-all, end-all for Alabama.

Now it's facing Florida, a matchup that the past two seasons has come in the SEC championship game, pitting No. 1 vs. No. 2 with a spot in the BCS championship game on the line.

Just in case this game needed more juice, the Tide provided it after last year's 32-13 thumping of the Gators: Alabama players mocked the Gator chomp in the closing seconds, and Tide fans cheered

when Florida legend Tim Tebow was shown on the big screen at the Georgia Dome—tears rolling down his face.

This fall, Alabama and Florida will play in the regular season October 2 at Tuscaloosa, setting up the potential for a rematch in the SEC title game. What's better than the new greatest rivalry in college football?

The greatest rivalry played twice.

"We could play them in a preseason game with nothing on the line," Florida center Mike Pouncey says, "and it would mean everything."

It's only a natural progression, really. Saban and Florida's Urban Meyer are the two best coaches and recruiters in the game—and the best defensive and offensive minds, respectively. The winner of the Florida-Alabama game the past two seasons went on to win the national title.

"To have that kind of a game, a game that everyone wants to watch, there has to be more than just the rivalry between the teams," says Arizona State coach Dennis Erickson, who coached Miami in a few epic clashes with Florida State in the 1990s. "It has to be important to everyone in the country."

Alabama-Florida is—and will be for a while. There's no use dancing around the answer any longer.

— Matt Hayes





INSIDE

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Eight other developments
we'll be watching this decade

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SN's top 25 and All-Americans

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→ REASON NO. 1: THE REST OF THE SEC IS IN DECLINE

Scan the 2009 season-ending AP poll and search for the SEC teams. There's Alabama at No. 1, with Florida two spots short of the penthouse. And then ... took a while, didn't it?

LSU checked in third-best among SEC teams, way down at No. 17, and Ole Miss came in at 20. No others cracked the top 25. The trend continues this preseason, with the Tide and Gators in SN's top five. A Ryan Mallett deep ball couldn't cover the distance between them and the conference's 10 other squads: Auburn (17), LSU (20) and Arkansas (21) are the only others in the top 25.

"It's pretty wide," former Tennessee coach Phil Fulmer says. "With Tennessee and Georgia especially where they are, there's definitely a gap there."

Alabama and Florida deserve some credit for the distance. Great coaching hires, national recruiting supremacy and

a knack for pulling out close games has turned them into titans. But this scenario has as much to do with disappointment as it does dominance.

Tennessee is 36-27 since 2005 and has had three different coaches in three seasons. LSU's nine losses in the past two seasons have fans doubting Les Miles—the guy who led the Tigers to the 2007 national title. Georgia lost five times last season, including a home game to Kentucky and a 26-point pounding at struggling Tennessee. Perhaps even worse for coach Mark Richt, his Bulldogs dropped consecutive games to Florida by a combined score of 90-27.

The SEC's defenders say the sagging programs are simply a byproduct of the nation's most competitive league.

"It's tough to rise up in this league and easy to fall," Mississippi State athletic director Scott Stricklin says. "From one week



to the next, it's like being on the seashore and the waves keep crashing over you."

As long as Alabama and Florida are the only teams making the waves, the Tide-Gators matchup will continue to be the biggest game in college football.

— Dave Curtis

While Tennessee, LSU and Georgia are in a down cycle, the SEC has turned into a two-team race.

After Alabama and Florida, just how mighty is the SEC?



1 ALABAMA

→ **State of the program:** Staff continuity, top-notch recruiting and success in championship situations hint at sustained greatness. The Tide should thrive as long as Nick Saban stays.

→ **Last SEC title:** 2009
Chance of another in the next five years: **Definite**

2 FLORIDA

→ **State of the program:** Tim Tebow, Percy Harvin and Joe Haden have given way to John Brantley, Andre Debose and Janoris Jenkins. That Urban Meyer is sticking around means the beat goes on.

→ **Last SEC title:** 2008
Chance of another in the next five years: **Definite**

3 AUBURN

→ **State of the program:** Gene Chizik's recruiting and Gus Malzahn's offense have pushed the Tigers closer to the SEC elite.

→ **Last SEC title:** 2004
Chance of another in the next five years: **Probable**

4 LSU

→ **State of the program:** The defense has dipped, quarterback play remains shaky, and fan confidence in coach Les Miles keeps sagging. This is a pivotal season for the Tigers.

→ **Last SEC title:** 2007
Chance of another in the next five years: **Probable**

5 ARKANSAS

→ **State of the program:** Things look fantastic for this year thanks mostly to golden boy quarterback Ryan Mallett. A lack of depth could push the Hogs back in 2011.

→ **Last SEC title:** None
Chance of another in the next five years: **Possible**

6 GEORGIA

→ **State of the program:** See LSU and add the uncertainty of a search for a new athletic director.

→ **Last SEC title:** 2005
Chance of another in the next five years: **Possible**

7 SOUTH CAROLINA

→ **State of the program:** Steve Spurrier was supposed to save the Gamecocks from mediocrity but hasn't gotten anywhere.

→ **Last SEC title:** None
Chance of another in the next five years: **Doubtful**

8 TENNESSEE

→ **State of the program:** Firing Phil Fulmer too late, then watching Lane Kiffin leave too soon was a double whammy that will hamper the Vols for at least two more seasons.

→ **Last SEC title:** 1998
Chance of another in the next five years: **Doubtful**

9 MISSISSIPPI STATE

→ **State of the program:** Dan Mullen is one of the best recent coaching hires in college football. He'll recruit elite talent to Starkville for the first time in more than a decade.

→ **Last SEC title:** 1941
Chance of another in the next five years: **Doubtful**

10 OLE MISS

→ **State of the program:** The Rebels have never won the SEC West and possess none of the momentum enjoyed by the other West schools. Good luck, Houston Nutt.

→ **Last SEC title:** 1963
Chance of another in the next five years: **Doubtful**

11 KENTUCKY

→ **State of the program:** Rich Brooks left on the wings of four straight bowl appearances, a leap some thought Kentucky could never make. The next jump, under Joker Phillips, looks 100 times harder.

→ **Last SEC title:** 1976
Chance of another in the next five years: **Slim**

12 VANDERBILT

→ **State of the program:** Vandy needs to hope new coach Robbie Caldwell is a blend of Joe Paterno, Amos Alonzo Stagg and Eddie Robinson. Unless he is, this is no time to talk titles.

→ **Last SEC title:** None
Chance of another in the next five years: **None**

— Dave Curtis

→ REASON NO. 2: THE COACHES ARE THE BEST MINDS IN THE GAME

It's a copycat profession, one in which you get ahead by seeing and reacting instead of watching and falling behind.

Wouldn't you know it, the game's best coaches have learned from each other the past two seasons, further fortifying the next great rivalry in college football.

"You better know what's coming," says Florida coach Urban Meyer, "and you better be ready to adjust and change when needed."

No wonder Meyer, when faced with finding a new defensive coordinator this spring, hired Teryl Austin, whose years as an assistant in the NFL gave him a unique perspective on the 3-4 defense. Yes, the same defense Alabama coach Nick Saban won national championships with at LSU in 2003 and Alabama last season and used to humiliate Florida in last year's SEC championship game.

Remember, see and react. Just like Saban did prior to last season, after he had watched Florida's spread option offense roll his defense in the 2008 SEC championship game. Saban had his offensive staff install principles of the spread option; including using Heisman Trophy winner Mark Ingram as quarterback in a Wildcat formation.

"When we added (spread principles), it kind of got the entire offense jacked up," Ingram says. "It energized us."

Just when you think the two best coaches in the game couldn't get better, they copy each other—because no one reacts to change more effectively and efficiently than Meyer and Saban. And that's why the stakes are even higher for what could be two meetings between the rivals again this fall.

"We could've just said, 'Let's keep doing what we're doing,'" Florida safety Ahmad Black says. "I remember watching tape before last year's game, thinking, *Oh this is interesting, they're using some of our offense.* If something works, you'd be foolish not to try it."

Remember, see and react.

— Matt Hayes



Meyer (left) and Saban aren't too proud to take a look at each other's teams in an effort to figure out what to change about their own.

Why it's so hard to prepare for Meyer's offense

By South Carolina assistant head coach/defense Ellis Johnson



When I played in college, everybody was running the triple option. But this is very foreign to a lot of young coaches who didn't come up in that era. That's all it is. They've gone back to splitback veer and the wishbone theories of options but out of the shotgun.

When you've got a kid like Tim Tebow, who's a tremendous runner and a really good passer, and you've also got all the speed they had spreading the field, it's very difficult to prepare for.

With John Brantley, it will be more like when they had Chris Leak.

Chris never carried the ball. I think John is a better ballcarrier, but he won't be Tebow. Brantley could be as difficult to defend as any of them because he's the one who can do both a little bit.

— As told to Matt Crossman

Why it's so hard to prepare for Saban's defense

By Auburn offensive coordinator Gus Malzahn



You try to figure out what gives you the best chance of being successful and try to avoid the things you won't be successful with. They have great athletes—there's no doubt about that. They do a good job. But you prepare the same as you prepare for the rest. You have to be aggressive right back at him. That's very important.

— As told to Matt Crossman

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REASON NO. 3:

THE QUARTERBACKS ARE ALL ABOUT WINNING

The one person on the Florida sideline who didn't want to see Tim Tebow return in the game that followed a wicked concussion last September was John Brantley. Forgive Brantley, but the whiff of what he could bring to the Florida offense was intoxicating—even though it never came to fruition.

"I know this offense; I know the potential of what we can do," Brantley says. "I was disappointed that I didn't play."

That will make this fall that much sweeter. Brantley will assume control of one of the most high-profile jobs in college football, and the only things standing between him and an SEC—and perhaps national—championship? Greg McElroy and Alabama.

Want to know why Alabama vs. Florida is the game's best rivalry? Because both teams only play quarterbacks who get that piling up stats ranks far behind winning the game.

John Parker Wilson won 12 games in 2008 at Alabama, and McElroy won 14 last year. Tim Tebow won 35 times in three seasons as a starter at Florida, and his NFL draft scouting report said more about him being a winner than it did individual accomplishments.

"(Having this job is) a privilege, and I'm incredibly fortunate," McElroy says. "You wonder, how many guys would kill to be in my position?"

Or how many could flourish in those jobs? The Gators' spread option runs through the quarterback—his skill and ability are critical to the success of the complex system. The Crimson Tide ask the quarterback to play within an offense based on the power running game—knowing at some point they will need him to win games (Auburn and Florida last season) if the run is ineffective or used as a decoy.

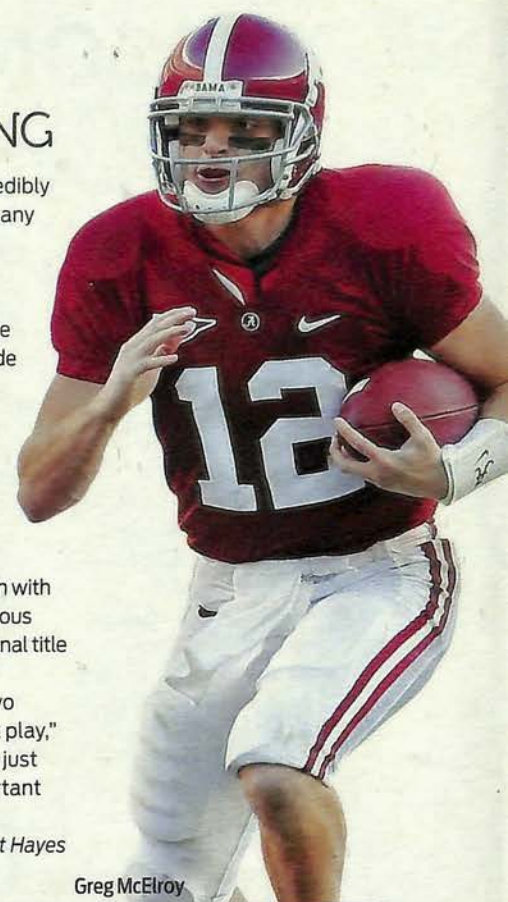
By the time McElroy leaves Alabama, he could have two national championships. And if Brantley is as successful as many expect—even with Florida relying more on the pass than in the previous three seasons with Tebow—he might win a national title or two.

"The one common denominator of those two teams the last three or so years is quarterback play," Mississippi State coach Dan Mullen says. "You just don't see mistakes made from the most important position on the field."

— Matt Hayes



John Brantley



Greg McElroy

JOHN BRANTLEY AND GREG MCELROY HOW THEY STACK UP

JOHN BRANTLEY

6-3/220, JR.

The Gatorade national player of the year at Ocala (Fla.) Trinity Catholic in 2006, he set the Florida state record for career touchdown passes with 99—one more than Tim Tebow.

0-0

54-of-76 (71.1 percent),
645 yards, 10 TDs, 1 interception, 183.1 rating

His father, John III, was the starting quarterback at Florida in 1978; uncle Scot was All-American linebacker for the Gators in the late 1970s.

Weathered the media storm concerning a potential start at LSU last season while Tebow recuperated from a concussion

"I really haven't done anything here—I know that. But I'm very comfortable in this offense and very confident in my ability. I look forward to experiencing everything for the first time. The first road game, the first comeback opportunity, the first 2-minute drill. It's exciting. I don't look at it as living up to someone else. I look at it as living up to the tradition those before me have built here at Florida."

The basics

High school

Career record as a starter

Career numbers

Family ties

Biggest accomplishment

He said it

GREG MCELROY

6-3/225, SR.

After sitting behind former Missouri star Chase Daniel at Southlake (Texas) Carroll, McElroy started for the Texas high school power for one season and threw a Class 5A-record 56 touchdown passes.

14-0

214-of-345 (62.0 percent),
2,704 yards, 19 TDs, 5 interceptions, 143.1 rating

His father, Greg Sr., played football at Hawaii and is now the senior vice president of sales and marketing for the Dallas Cowboys.

Led Alabama to the 2009 national championship

"I dreamed of playing for Alabama, of wearing No. 12, of winning a championship, of doing exactly what we're doing right now. Words can't describe how blessed I feel. We're not only winning games and making memories, we're being coached and led by guys who know what it takes to succeed in the NFL. What more could you ask for as a player? It's just the perfect situation to be part of."

VIEW FROM THE SIDELINE

An SEC defensive coordinator's take

JOHN BRANTLEY: "If there's one guy who can step in that shadow of (Tim) Tebow and play well, it's Brantley. This isn't a guy who is going to be intimidated. He has sat and learned not only behind Tebow for three years but with (Florida coach) Urban (Meyer) for three years. He's got a live arm; he's going to open up that offense. I keep hearing people say (Florida's offense) is going to be like when Chris Leak was there. No offense to Chris Leak, but Chris Leak can't throw like John Brantley. The football gods may strike me down, but Tebow can't throw like John Brantley, either."

GREG MCELROY: "I really like him as a leader and a tough guy who stands tall in the pocket. He's not afraid to stand in there and take a hit to make a play work. They're a power running team, and he doesn't have to win games—although he did it twice late last year in a couple of big ones against Auburn and Florida. Like every other quarterback, he's different when he's got someone in his face. But they run the ball so well and set up the pass with it, he just stands there in the pocket and picks people apart."

— As told to Matt Hayes

→ REASON NO. 4: THEY GET THE BEST RECRUITS

He was part of the Super Seven, the group of players from mythical national champion Lakeland (Fla.) High School who signed with the Florida Gators in 2007. More important, Chris Rainey was one of 27 signees who comprised one of the best recruiting classes of the last decade.

The class has already produced five NFL draft picks—two in the first round—with more to come.

"In a couple of years," Rainey says, "we want people to look back at our class in awe."

Here's the crazy part: That group probably wasn't Florida's best of the decade. Nor was it better than Alabama's 2008 class, which including Heisman Trophy winner Mark Ingram, wideout Julio Jones and linebacker Dont'a Hightower (and at least 10 drafted or draftable recruits).

"Each year, everyone wants their class to stand out," Hightower says. "But together, we're Alabama. That's what's important."

Together, Florida and Alabama have dominated the recruiting trail in recent years. Since 2006, Florida's classes have been ranked No. 2, 1, 3, 11 and 2 by Rivals.com. Alabama has been No. 1 twice and No. 5 once

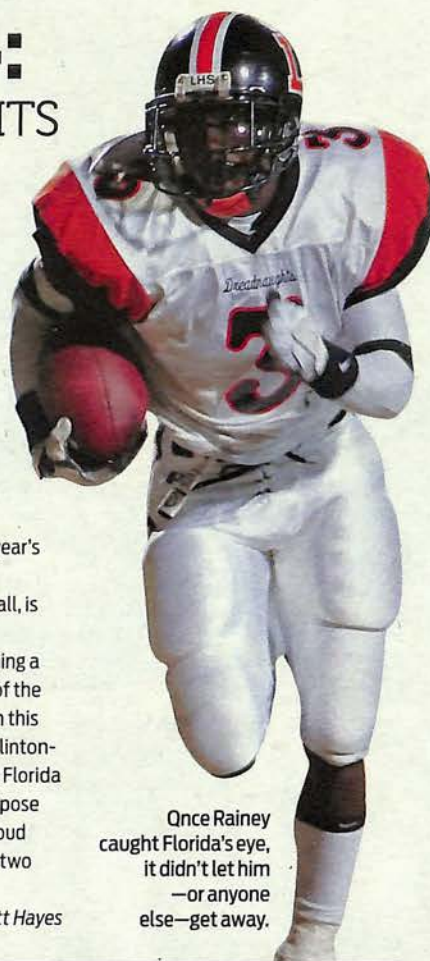
the past three years.

And both teams are only going to get better. The Gators already have a commitment from Rivals.com's No. 1 pro-style quarterback recruit for 2011 (Jeff Driskel), and Alabama has one from the nation's No. 2 outside linebacker (Brent Calloway). Considering the maniacal recruiting styles of Alabama coach Nick Saban and Florida coach Urban Meyer, it shouldn't be a shock when one of their teams finishes on top of next year's recruiting rankings.

Their biggest competition, after all, is each other.

"Florida uses the national title thing a little bit better since they won two of the last four, even though Alabama won this year," says defensive back Hasean Clinton-Dix of Orlando, an Alabama commit Florida still is recruiting hard. "They both expose you to what they did, and they're proud of it. I mean, they have won the last two (national titles) between them."

— Matt Hayes



Once Rainey caught Florida's eye, it didn't let him—or anyone else—get away.

Just one question: How are the schools' approaches different?



SN NO. 4 RECRUIT KASEAN WILLIAMS

WR, 6-2/200

Skyline (Sammamish, Wash.)

→ **Williams says:** "With (Florida coach) Urban (Meyer), I really like him because he makes you feel welcome. ... I really haven't talked to Alabama's staff as much. They send me letters all the time. Alabama hasn't been as aggressive. That style is nice, too, because you don't necessarily want schools just hassling you all the time."



SN NO. 18 RECRUIT DEVON BLACKMON

WR, 6-0/175

Summit (Fontana, Calif.)

→ **Blackmon says:** "Both coaches come across very strict and very direct. You understand their message—they don't beat around the bush with what they're saying. Urban is a little bit funnier. He can get you rolling sometimes. Don't get me wrong, he's businesslike, but he'll try to get you laughing when the business is done. One thing that's sort of the same about both of them is they don't promise starting positions like some coaches."



SN NO. 34 RECRUIT CURTIS GRANT

LB, 6-3/220

Hermitage (Richmond, Va.)

→ **Grant says:** "Coach Meyer is a little bit easier to get to than Coach Saban. Alabama is more of a program that uses its assistant coaches, too. ... Coach Meyer will joke a little bit with you, but Coach Saban I haven't had a chance to joke around with yet."

— Brian McLaughlin

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REASON NO. 5: TRADITIONAL RIVALRIES HAVE TAKEN A HIT

USC's Michael Morgan mulled over the multiple-choice question. Does the Trojans' biggest rival reside halfway across the country (Notre Dame)? Or the city (UCLA)? Or is it a nontraditional pick, such as Oregon or California?

Turns out, the answer is none of the above.

"I don't think any of those games around here is any more important than the other," the senior linebacker says. "I don't feel an extra buzz for any game, unless it's a championship game."

The stance is emblematic of a growing feeling across the nation: Where have the great rivalries gone?

Texas-Oklahoma remains a king-making game, as much a part of October as Halloween. Then comes

a dip that has coincided with the struggles of major programs around the nation.

Michigan's recent plunge has turned its duels with Ohio State into avert-your-eyes events. Miami-Florida State had grown so stale that ESPN pushed the game from its season-opening Monday night slot. The Oklahoma-Nebraska rivalry died with the creation of the Big 12, and the replacement Nebraska-Colorado meeting grew irrelevant as both schools tumbled.

"It just seems like there aren't as many great games anymore," former Texas All-American and 2010 College Football Hall of Fame inductee Steve McMichael says.

The Iron Bowl remains huge in the state of Alabama, but only twice in

the past 14 years have Auburn and Alabama finished with winning SEC records in the same season. UCLA-USC has had the same problem the past two decades: When one is up, the other is down—and the nation is apathetic about the matchup.

Even games with cool trophies—a golden egg, Paul Bunyan's axe, a keg of nails—have fallen from prominence.

Enter Florida-Alabama, with the personalities and the pedigrees to captivate the country.

"When our guys go to the marketplace, there's tremendous excitement about Florida-Alabama," CBS Sports executive vice president Mike Aresco says. "It's already the game everybody is talking about."

— Dave Curtis
SN

Rivalries for the next decade

Although traditional rivalries are fading, new ones are surging in popularity and energy. A look at four burgeoning annual series:

MIAMI-NORTH CAROLINA

→ 2010 MEETING: October 23 at Miami

→ 3 REASONS YOU'LL WANT TO WATCH

1. Butch Davis became famous by bringing Miami back into college football's elite. To do the same with the Tar Heels, he must go through the Hurricanes, whose fans hold him in high esteem.

2. Miami always boasts some of the best defensive talent in the country. And Davis keeps bringing it to Chapel Hill—expect at least five Tar Heels defenders to get drafted early in 2011.

3. Four teams have won ACC titles the past five years, but UNC and Miami remain shut out. If a dynasty emerges in the conference, though, it figures to come from this matchup.

WASHINGTON-USC

→ 2010 MEETING: October 2 at USC

→ 3 REASONS YOU'LL WANT TO WATCH

1. Old pals from their days together as USC assistants, Steve Sarkisian and Lane Kiffin look the part of greatness. Beating the other guy consistently would give one a leg up.

2. The coaches' relationship and similar offensive philosophies mean they'll duel for the same California recruits on the turf each knows well.

3. The quarterbacks are elite. Jake Locker, a sure-thing first-round NFL pick, and USC's Matt Barkley, a likely first-rounder down the road, go head-to-head this fall. With these coaching staffs, expect similar matchups for seasons to come.

TEXAS A&M-TEXAS TECH

→ 2010 MEETING: October 30 at Texas A&M

→ 3 REASONS YOU'LL WANT TO WATCH

1. The Big 12 is preparing to lose two teams, but the Lone Star State should remain strong. Whoever gets the upper hand in this series will be the next to challenge Texas and Oklahoma at the top.

2. Everybody knows everybody. Texas-bred players dominate both rosters, and the familiarity further fuels these clashes.

3. Tech has dominated the series of late, but with the Red Raiders in transition and A&M making strides, a shift might be afoot.

CINCINNATI-PITT

→ 2010 MEETING: December 4 at Cincinnati

→ 3 REASONS YOU'LL WANT TO WATCH

1. These teams are the future of the Big East. Both schools sit in plentiful recruiting locales. The cities already have an NFL rivalry, and now their college teams have emerged as the league's best.

2. The matchup presents a clash of styles. The Panthers want to hand the ball to a stud tailback. The Bearcats would send eight receivers into patterns if they could.

3. Each of the past three meetings was decided by seven or fewer points. Last season's de facto league title matchup, Cincy's thrilling 45-44 road win, ranked among the best games of the year.

— Dave Curtis

8 other developments we'll be keeping an eye on this decade

1] WHAT LIES AHEAD FOR JOE PATERNO AND PENN STATE?

One moment, Joe Paterno, 83, talks of becoming college football's first 90-year-old coach. Another, his peers at other schools extend the 25-year tradition of telling Penn State-leaning recruits Paterno won't be around when they graduate.

So, which is it? Not even the Nittany Lions legends can forecast the future of the program's coaching position.

"It's the \$64 million question," former Penn State running back and College Football Hall of Famer Curt Warner says.

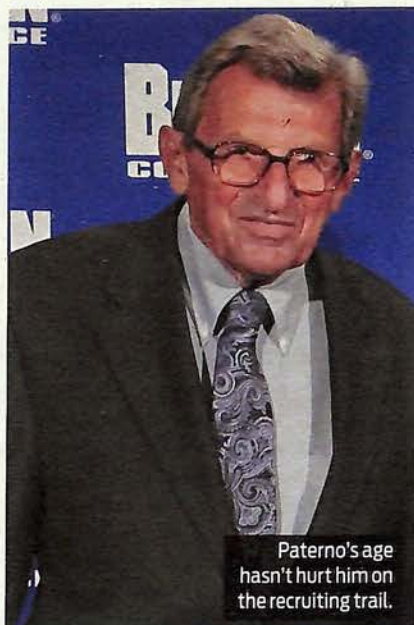
Paterno has restored consistency to the program, which has shared two Big Ten titles since 2005 and reached January bowls the past two seasons, but his health is a

question mark—a leg injury forced him to coach from the press box in 2008, and an illness this offseason prompted him to cancel a series of public appearances.

Warner, along with most in the program, say the Nittany Lions won't slip when Paterno leaves. Strong recruiting classes keep coming to State College, lured mainly by a staff that includes five alums and six coaches with more than 10 years under Paterno.

"We're all broken in," says defensive coordinator Tom Bradley, whose name has been mentioned as Paterno's successor. "We know what he wants and how things are supposed to go here."

— Dave Curtis



Paterno's age hasn't hurt him on the recruiting trail.

2] WILL THE ACC COASTAL RIVAL THE SEC WEST AND THE SOON-TO-BE DISSOLVED BIG 12 SOUTH AS THE COUNTRY'S BEST DIVISION?

Hard to imagine, but the conversation about the best division in college football has to include a group from the ACC. Four teams from the Coastal Division are ranked in *Sporting News'* preseason top 25: No. 4 Miami, No. 12 Virginia Tech, No. 18 Georgia Tech and No. 23 North Carolina.

"The Coastal is like four guys getting thrown into a cage," Georgia Tech defensive end Jason Peters says, "and only one's going to come out on top."

Yes, the SEC West has four of SN's top 25 teams—including No. 1 Alabama—and the Big 12 South has perennial heavyweights Texas (No. 9) and Oklahoma (No. 10). But now the Coastal can make an argument to be included in the same breath.

And this season's first two

weeks will reveal whether the division deserves the praise when North Carolina (LSU), Virginia Tech (Boise State) and Miami (Ohio State) face top 20 programs.

"It's a physical conference," Miami coach Randy Shannon says. "They all want to run the football to make the game short, and they play great defense and don't give up big plays."

But the Coastal's grits are buttered on the other side of the ball.

"It's the defense," Duke coach David Cutcliffe says. "You look at the people who are producing pro football players on defense right now at a pretty high rate and a pretty high level, and it's the guys over at our place."

— Ryan Fagan

My Turn: Sorry, SEC, but college football's best division belongs to us

By Georgia Tech running back Roddy Jones



Jones, a junior, is a two-year starter for the Yellow Jackets. In 2009, he averaged 6.5 yards per carry on the ACC championship team.

The Coastal Division is stacked. You can look at the SEC—in the East you've got Florida and Georgia and Tennessee is coming up, but they're not quite there. You look at the West and you've got Alabama and LSU, and I guess Arkansas you can put in that category as well.

In the Big 12, I don't think they stack up in either division to the ACC Coastal. We've got the best division in the nation. We feel a camaraderie now within the division, but once the season starts, there's no more camaraderie.

— As told to Ryan Fagan

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3

CAN USC AVOID FALLING OFF THE MAP?

There are two ways to read the reactions from those close to the USC probation situation:

1. Positive thoughts lead to positive results.

2. Straight up-denial.

"The program is in great shape in so many ways, as far as football is concerned," says former USC coach Pete Carroll, who left during the offseason to coach the NFL's Seahawks. "They'll be challenged, but they also will do very well."

So says the coach who accomplished the remarkable in such a short time in Troy—and who got out of town before the NCAA hammer fell on his program. New coach Lane Kiffin must clean up the considerable mess, with the very clear understanding of what happened the last time USC fell off the national radar for a few years.

In the 1990s, Washington rose to

new heights under Don James, UCLA dominated USC both on the field and in Los Angeles-area recruiting and previously laughable loser Oregon ushered in a new era of winning under Mike Bellotti.

What makes Kiffin think it won't happen again, especially considering all three of those rival schools now have dynamic coaches (and terrific recruiters) in place? The two-year bowl ban, four years of probation and vacating wins have received the most publicity among the sanctions. But a loss of 30 scholarships—10 annually from 2011-13—is one of the most significant penalties ever placed on a program.

"We have confidence in who we are and what we're selling," Kiffin says.

"We're going to compete at the highest level. We're not going anywhere."

So says the coach with the positive thoughts. Or the one in straight-up denial.

— Matt Hayes



Kiffin will have to overcome NCAA sanctions, but he still has USC's rich history to sell.

My Turn: Kiffin has a rough road ahead



By North Carolina coach Butch Davis

Davis replaced Dennis Erickson at Miami in 1995 and was greeted with an NCAA mess. As a result of numerous infractions,

Miami lost 24 scholarships over two seasons and was banned from the postseason for one year.

We had to endure an awful lot from that probation. The first two or three years, it's all about attrition. In 1997, our third season, we had the first losing season at Miami in 18 years—and

in that season, after all that attrition, we were down to 58 scholarship players.

The 1997 season was an unbelievably difficult and challenging season to play. We were throwing babies to the lions every week: guys that had no business playing so early but had to.

We won nine games the next two seasons but didn't get it fully turned around until 2000. After that, Miami had huge success. That's a full five seasons before we felt like we were back to the level we needed to be to compete for national championships again.

— As told to Matt Hayes



Texas has hooked fans from all over the country.

4

WILL TEXAS SUPPLANT NOTRE DAME AS COLLEGE FOOTBALL'S MOST POWERFUL AND INFLUENTIAL PROGRAM?

This year's conference realignment failed to give college football a significant shake. Still, the headlines trumpeted a paradigm shift—the big winner, and new, undisputed powerhouse, was the University of Texas.

"It's one of the strongest brands out there in sports," CNBC sports business reporter Darren Rovell says. "Texas drove a lot of the expansion talks."

The case for Texas as king has strength. The Longhorns allowed the Big 12 to stay in existence while preventing the Pac-10 from blossoming into a superconference. They have ranked first in merchandise sales for four straight fiscal years, according to the Collegiate Licensing Company's list of most popular schools. Texas successfully defended its title as the nation's No. 1 school for athletic department revenue,

with \$138.5 million in the 2008-09 academic year. The superlatives roll on.

The next frontier appears to be a Longhorns-centric television network that would give Texas a unique and independent national reach now experienced only by Notre Dame. The Irish have played every home football game on NBC since 1991 and collected immeasurable dividends from the agreement.

"Everybody feels like they have a connection to Notre Dame," Irish alum and 1987 Heisman Trophy winner Tim Brown says. "You can't go to California and hear everybody talking about Texas. Not in the Midwest or on the East Coast."

A successful Longhorns network, though, might change that.

— Dave Curtis

My Turn: Texas has always been a regional power, but now it's a national one, too

By former Longhorns coach Darrell Royal



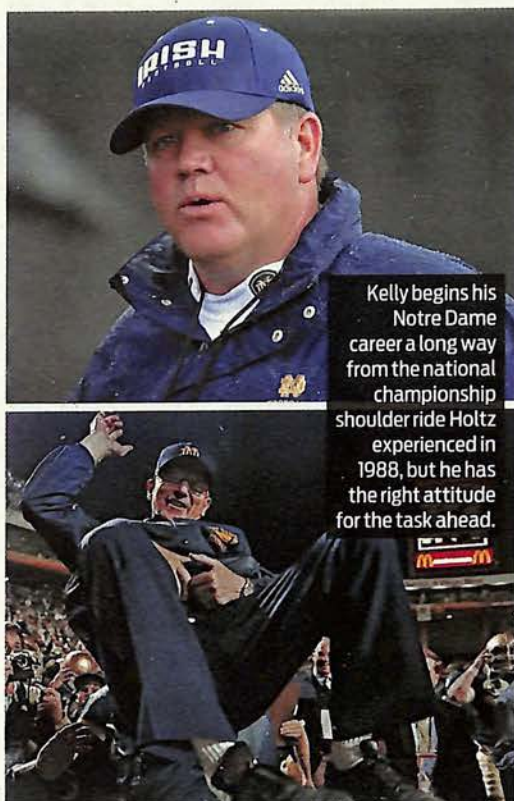
Royal guided Texas to a 167-47-5 record and three national titles in 20 seasons (1957-76) as coach. He also served as the school's athletic director from 1962-80.

Notre Dame has always been pretty powerful, even back in my day and before then, too, I suppose. But Texas has always been a leader in this part of the country. And I know Texas is trying hard nowadays to be out in front of the pack.

You saw the influence of the University of Texas this past offseason—it kept the Big 12 alive and kept different conferences around the country from completely changing. College football would've changed plenty if Texas hadn't decided to stick with tradition. I like the old traditions, and I think it was the right decision. Now I just hope all the schools and conferences stop fooling with everything for a while.

— As told to Steve Greenberg

5] WHEN WILL NOTRE DAME BECOME NOTRE DAME AGAIN?



Kelly begins his Notre Dame career a long way from the national championship shoulder ride Holtz experienced in 1988, but he has the right attitude for the task ahead.

For the fourth time since 1996, Notre Dame has hit the reset button on its football program. Brian Kelly is the latest attempt at a Rockne reincarnation.

Will this change be the one that gets the Irish back to national championship contention? The future schedules include more Western Michigan types than usual. The strength and nutrition programs received a huge boost after last year's defense lost 15 pounds per man from Labor Day to Thanksgiving. And Kelly says his team already possesses winning ingredients.

"I expected a softer group in the sense that the mental toughness wouldn't be there," he says. "The guys still aren't physically strong for where we want them. But I was really

impressed with the mental toughness."

Kelly still has his work cut out for him. He must recruit coast to coast for all-state players who are also honor roll students. And now he must wrest them from Florida and Texas, which weren't recruiting powers on a national level during Notre Dame's past championship runs.

His biggest asset? Try one losing season in his 19 years as a head coach, which gives him a chance to return the Irish to glory.

"If you're banking on potential, you have questions and problems," Texas coach Mack Brown says. "If you're banking on facts, then there's no reason he can't do it."

— Dave Curtis

My Turn: Kelly is ready to lead a Lou Holtz-type turnaround

By former Notre Dame TE Derek Brown



Brown began his Notre Dame career in 1988, the Irish's third season under Lou Holtz. Holtz was hired to revive a struggling program; Notre Dame had gone 5-6 the season

before he arrived. After 5-6 and 8-4 seasons, in 1988, with Brown starting, the Irish went 12-0 and were crowned national champions.

The sense that I get is Coach Kelly is coming in with the same attitude as when Coach Holtz came in, where it's: *Here's how I do things, here is where the bar has been set, and you're either going to be with us or without us.* I think that kids are going to be buying what he's selling and throwing their hat in the ring. What I like to see is a whole new attitude on the field. I like to see that chip on their shoulders to some extent—you need that.

Just thinking about what kind of expectations as far as wins-losses, I'm not overly concerned about that right now. I'm more concerned with what the attitude is going to be. What kind of pride are they going to have? What kind of product are they going to put on the field?

If you put a good product out there, you're going to win games, but it's also attitude.

— As told to Ken Bradley

6] WILL THE PRO-STYLE QB MAKE A COMEBACK?

The dropback passer might not be dead—maybe he's just waiting to be asked to play again. Because a few athletic QBs had success in the spread offense, other teams copied the system until it became all the rage.

But that could be a cyclical change, not a permanent one. SMU coach June Jones, a longtime QB guru, says too much is made of the system distinction, anyway. "A quarterback is a quarterback," he says. "They show up in any system they play in."

Still, there's no denying the hot offense lately has been the spread. But that could change quickly if a few teams find success with pro-style attacks, and there are several candidates this season. Ryan Mallett is expected to lead Arkansas back into contention in the SEC this year, and Florida State's Christian Ponder might win the Heisman in a pro-style offense. The fact Steve Sarkisian turned Washington's offense into what is largely a pro system might win Jake Locker the Heisman Trophy.

Either way, make no mistake: A coach



who lands a stud pro-style recruit will figure out how to run a pro-style offense. "If we have a 6-6, 6-7, 245-pound quarterback who feels more comfortable underneath center, then we're going to be underneath center," Cincinnati coach Butch Jones says.

— Matt Crossman

Arkansas' Mallett, Florida State's Ponder and Washington's Locker may end up persuading other teams to try pro-style offenses.

My Turn: The pocket passer has a future in college football

By Illinois offensive coordinator Paul Petrino



Petrino used a pro-style system with Ryan Mallett as Arkansas' coordinator last year, and the team averaged 35.8 points per game—10th-most in the NCAA. With Brian Brohm at Louisville from

2004-06, Petrino's offenses ranked in the top 10 in scoring every season.

Everything goes in cycles. A lot of it trickles down from the colleges to the high schools. Quarterback is becoming a little bit more of an athletic position. But if there's a Ryan Mallett or Brian Brohm out there, they're still going to be successful in college football. If they have a good arm and they're tough, they're going to be successful. If they have all that and can run, like the kid in Washington, Jake Locker, that's even better.

You try to get the very best guy you can get. If you can get that true first-round draft pick who can sit back there and throw the heck out of it, then that's what you play with. That would be great. But maybe that's not who you get. If you get a real athletic kid, then you build around him. Once you get a guy, you find out what he does best and build around that.

— As told to Matt Crossman

7

WILL THE BIG TEN GET REVENGE FOR A DECADE OF BCS BEATDOWNS?

Big Ten coaches and administrators reveled in last winter's 4-3 bowl record—the league's first winning postseason since 2002. After years of playing the role of bowl pinata for college football's titans, the boys from the Midwest took down Oregon and Georgia Tech in BCS games, in addition to Miami and LSU.

This, keep in mind, is a league that went 1-6 in bowls the previous season and lost recent BCS bowls by scores of 49-17, 38-24 and 41-14.

Ohio State, Iowa and Wisconsin, owners of three of those momentum-shifting victories, return the bulk of their stars for 2010 and could start a Big Ten renaissance on the national scene.

"I was looking, and some of the best players in college football are playing in the Big Ten," Michigan coach Rich Rodriguez says. "There's still a lot of young talent in this league."

Michigan is a wild card, but getting the Wolverines back to prominence, combined with the 2011 addition of returning-to-glory Nebraska, would give the conference five programs with legitimate chances to win the league's first national title since Ohio State in 2002.

"It's nice to see teams in our league getting the job done," Wisconsin quarterback Scott Tolzien says. "Hopefully, we can keep it going and show people what this league is all about."

— Dave Curtis



Ohio State is still shaking off the disappointment of blowout losses in the BCS national championship games after the 2006 and '07 seasons.

My Turn: Ohio State will help the Big Ten improve its national image

By former Buckeyes coach John Cooper



Cooper went 111-43-4 in 13 seasons at OSU. His teams finished No. 2 in the final AP polls in 1997 and 1999.

Everybody goes through stages, and I don't think it's any question the last five, six, seven years this league has been down. The league's still in a bit of a rebuilding mode, but you'll see the resurgence in the Big Ten, no question

about it. Ohio State is clearly, clearly the best team in the league this year. We've got a good chance to play for a national championship. Terrelle Pryor is head and shoulders above any other quarterback in this league, particularly with his athletic ability.

Michigan has to do something. They either have to get better or something has to happen up there. That's too good a program to play the type of football they've been playing the past few years.

— As told to Ryan Fagan



Last season's Fiesta Bowl win looks more like a stepping stone than the pinnacle for the Broncos.

8 HOW BIG CAN BOISE STATE BECOME?

The TV cart. Want to know how far Boise State has come in less than 15 years? Ask Dirk Koetter about the TV cart.

"When we got there in 1998, our video equipment—if you can call it video equipment—was a VCR and a small television on a TV stand that we wheeled back and forth between the stadium and the football offices," Koetter says. "It's outhouse to the penthouse now."

When Dan Hawkins coached the Broncos, he used to say, "Bigger isn't always better."

Guess what? Better is always better.

"I'm amazed at how quickly it all happened," says Ole Miss coach Houston Nutt, who preceded Koetter at Boise State. "You have to remember, Boise State always won big when they played in the lower divisions. The people there are committed to doing the right thing,

and it shows in every move they make."

Just this summer, Boise State announced plans to join the Mountain West Conference, a blossoming league that soon could qualify for BCS status. The Broncos have played in two BCS bowls and won both, their renovated jewel of a stadium is smaller but of SEC-quality, and they will begin this season ranked in the top five—with a legitimate chance at playing in the BCS national championship game.

That's as big as it gets.

"We can be as big as we want," says Boise State quarterback Kellen Moore, a Heisman Trophy candidate. "We're building something special, and every year is another step."

Another step toward the penthouse.

— Matt Hayes
SN

My Turn: Because of the support system at Boise State, the sky is the limit

By Colorado coach Dan Hawkins



Hawkins served as an assistant under Dirk Koetter for three seasons, then took over as Boise State's head coach in December

2000. In his five seasons on the job, he compiled a 53-11 record and won or shared four WAC titles, and Boise State finished in the AP top 25 for the first time. He talked to *Sporting News* about the evolution of the program.

It's funny how things work. As soon as I took over as head coach, I told people our goals, that we're going to

be a top 15 team. And people told me, "You're wacko." But I wasn't. You look at what they've accomplished and can accomplish—all those things are possible. You've got to get some things to fall in place and dance with lady luck a little bit.

The ceiling is whatever the whole system can support. As long as they keep supporting facilities and recruiting and budget and salary, it can continue to blossom. The fabric there is unbelievable. Obviously, everybody loves a winner. You start getting after it and garnering some momentum, everybody becomes a believer.

Will the system allow them to be first or second at the end of the year? Oh, yeah. I think so. I hope it happens.

— As told to Dave Curtis

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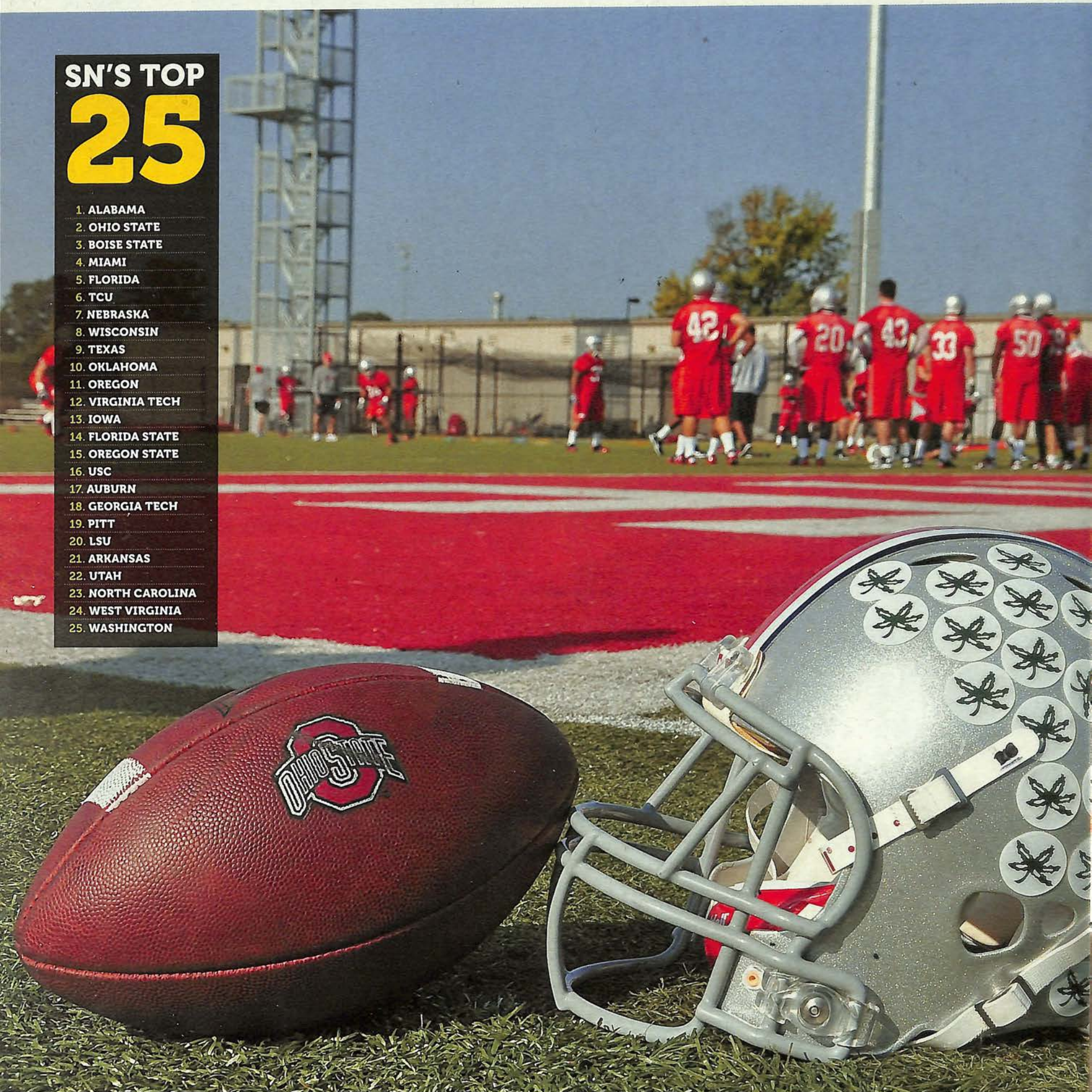
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SN'S TOP 25

1. ALABAMA
2. OHIO STATE
3. BOISE STATE
4. MIAMI
5. FLORIDA
6. TCU
7. NEBRASKA
8. WISCONSIN
9. TEXAS
10. OKLAHOMA
11. OREGON
12. VIRGINIA TECH
13. IOWA
14. FLORIDA STATE
15. OREGON STATE
16. USC
17. AUBURN
18. GEORGIA TECH
19. PITT
20. LSU
21. ARKANSAS
22. UTAH
23. NORTH CAROLINA
24. WEST VIRGINIA
25. WASHINGTON



THE HEISMAN TROPHY: A FOURTH FOR FLORIDA?

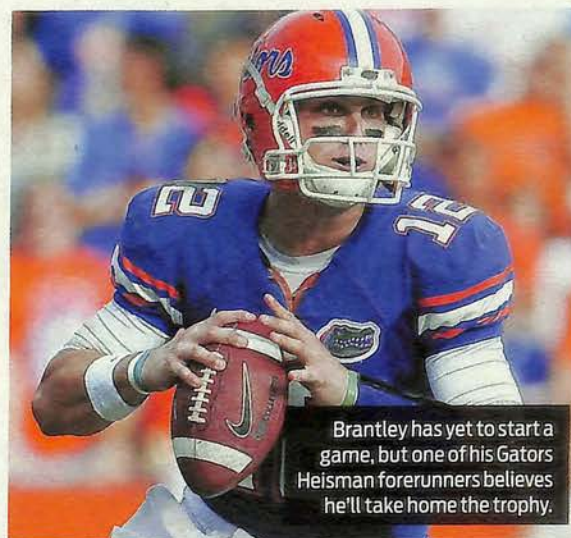
Steve Spurrier, Danny Wuerffel, Tim Tebow ... John Brantley? Don't be surprised if a fourth Florida quarterback is striking the Heisman pose come December, says 1996 winner Wuerffel, a big Brantley backer who finds flaws with the rest of the field.

Reigning winner Mark Ingram of Alabama? "He'll have to share the backfield with Trent Richardson," Wuerffel says.

Stat-stuffing quarterbacks Kellen Moore (Boise State) and Case Keenum (Houston)? "They play for non-BCS teams, which harms their chances."

Speedy running back Jacquizz Rodgers? "Probably won't win because A) Oregon State isn't very good and B) Oregon State rarely plays on national TV."

Ask seven other Heisman winners for their picks, as SN did, and you're likely to hear at least five different names. John David Crow (Texas A&M, 1957) cast a vote for Texas A&M quarterback Jerrod Johnson. Mike Rozier (Nebraska, 1983) is going with Ingram. Paul Hornung (Notre Dame, 1956) likes Ohio State quarterback Terrelle Pryor—"if he plays big against Michigan and Penn State."



Brantley has yet to start a game, but one of his Gators Heisman forerunners believes he'll take home the trophy.



TERRY BAKER
1962, OREGON STATE

THE PICK:
JACQUIZZ RODGERS,
RB, OREGON STATE

"Quizz gets more out of less than any other running back in the country. He creates a missed tackle on almost every run."



GARY BEBAN
1967, UCLA

THE PICK:
MARK INGRAM,
RB, ALABAMA

"Last year's winner's photo will be posted on opponents' bulletin boards, but the Tide have a strong returning team and a soft schedule—aside from Penn State. Given recent performances, I consider Kellen Moore a strong contender, but he will be severely hampered by a limited schedule and restricted exposure."



TY DETMER
1990, BYU

THE PICK:
TERRELLE PRYOR,
QB, OHIO STATE

"Pryor is ready for a big year. He has a couple seasons under his belt and will have the ball in his hands every play. He can beat you with the run and pass."



JASON WHITE
2003, OKLAHOMA

THE PICK:
CASE KEENUM,
QB, HOUSTON

"He put up big numbers last year. If he can do the same this year, I feel he deserves an invite."

—Jeff D'Alessio

SN All-Americans

OFFENSE

QB **Ryan Mallett**, Jr., Arkansas
RB **Mark Ingram**, Jr., Alabama
RB **Dion Lewis**, Soph., Pitt
OL **Mike Pouncey**, Sr., Florida
OL **Jason Pinkston**, Sr., Pitt
OL **Rodney Hudson**, Sr., Florida State
OL **Stefen Wisniewski**, Sr., Penn State
OL **Jake Kirkpatrick**, Sr., TCU
WR **Ryan Broyles**, Jr., Oklahoma
WR **A.J. Green**, Jr., Georgia
TE **Kyle Rudolph**, Jr., Notre Dame

SPECIALISTS

K **Kai Forbath**, Sr., UCLA
P **Derek Epperson**, Sr., Baylor

DEFENSE

DL **Allen Bailey**, Sr., Miami
DL **Jurrell Casey**, Jr., USC
DL **Cameron Heyward**, Sr., Ohio State
DL **Jeremy Beal**, Sr., Oklahoma
LB **Tank Carder**, Jr., TCU
LB **Lawrence Wilson**, Sr., Connecticut
LB **Kelvin Sheppard**, Sr., LSU
DB **Trevin Wade**, Jr., Arizona
DB **Curtis Brown**, Sr., Texas
DB **Jeron Johnson**, Sr., Boise State
DB **Deunta Williams**, Sr., North Carolina

KR **D.J. Monroe**, Soph., Texas
PR **LaVon Brazill**, Sr., Ohio

The Big Ten didn't have a dominant team last season, but Ohio State started 2010 summer practice at No. 2 in SN's top 25.

THE BCS BOWLS: SN'S PROJECTIONS

Rose: Oregon vs. Boise State
Fiesta: Pitt vs. Texas
Orange: Miami vs. Wisconsin
Sugar: Florida vs. Oklahoma
BCS national championship:
Ohio State vs. Alabama



ACC

Projected finish

Atlantic

Florida State	7-1 (9-3)
Boston College	4-4 (8-4)
N.C. State	3-5 (6-6)
Clemson	3-5 (5-7)
Wake Forest	1-7 (3-9)
Maryland	1-7 (3-9)

Coastal

Miami	7-1 (10-2)
Virginia Tech	7-1 (10-2)
Georgia Tech	6-2 (9-3)
North Carolina	5-3 (9-3)
Duke	2-6 (5-7)
Virginia	2-6 (5-7)

SN All-conference team

OFFENSE

QB **Christian Ponder**, Sr., Florida State
 RB **Montel Harris**, Jr., Boston College
 RB **Ryan Williams**, Soph., Virginia Tech
 OL **Anthony Castonzo**, Sr., Boston College
 OL **Orlando Franklin**, Sr., Miami
 OL **Sean Bedford**, Sr., Georgia Tech
 OL **Rodney Hudson**, Sr., Florida State
 OL **Chris Hairston**, Sr., Clemson
 WR **Torrey Smith**, Jr., Maryland
 WR **Bert Reed**, Jr., Florida State
 TE **George Bryan**, Jr., N.C. State

DEFENSE

DL **Robert Quinn**, Jr., North Carolina
 DL **Marvin Austin**, Sr., North Carolina
 DL **Jarvis Jenkins**, Sr., Clemson
 DL **Allen Bailey**, Sr., Miami
 LB **Luke Kuechly**, Soph., Boston College
 LB **Alex Wujciak**, Jr., Maryland
 LB **Mark Herzlich**, Sr., Boston College
 DB **Kendric Burney**, Sr., North Carolina
 DB **Brandon Harris**, Jr., Miami
 DB **Deunta Williams**, Sr., North Carolina
 DB **DeAndre McDaniel**, Sr., Clemson

SPECIALISTS

K **Matt Boshier**, Sr., Miami
 P **Matt Boshier**, Sr., Miami



COACH OF THE YEAR
Randy Shannon,
 Miami



PLAYER OF THE YEAR
Christian Ponder,
 Florida State

5 people who will shape the conference race

1

Christian Ponder, QB, Florida State

To hear Ponder tell it, he's pretty much a system quarterback. "The offense that Coach (Jimbo) Fisher has implemented has given me a lot of control, and with this offense there's no real bad decision you can make," he says. "There's a lot of guys who are open all the time. It's really easy on me, you know? I don't have a hard job." To hear others tell it, though, the senior is a favorite to win the Heisman Trophy coming off an injury-shortened season in which he completed 68.8 percent of his passes. "I know what he's turned into," Virginia Tech coach Frank Beamer says. "Experience is a wonderful thing."

→ 2.

Jacory Harris, QB, Miami

Ask any of Harris' teammates what stands out about the junior, and they'll sing the same song: "He never gets rattled in big situations," defensive end Allen Bailey says. "He has great composure in the pocket regardless of what's going on around him, what quarter it is, what down it is." That composure must be there early—in back-to-back nonconference games at Ohio State (No. 2 in SN's preseason poll) and at Pitt (No. 19)—as the Hurricanes try to establish themselves as national title contenders.

3

Mike London, coach, Virginia

He left his alma mater, Richmond, to take over at Virginia, where he was an assistant for six seasons. The task: turning around a program coming off a three-win season and with one bowl appearance in the past four years. That process started with a focus on relationships with his players, his coaches, the fans and the community. "He's such a down-to-earth guy," Virginia quarterback Marc Verica says. "That's important, to have that kind of relaxed relationship with your coach where you don't see him as this detached, untouchable figure. He's just right there with you. That's a special skill that he has."

4

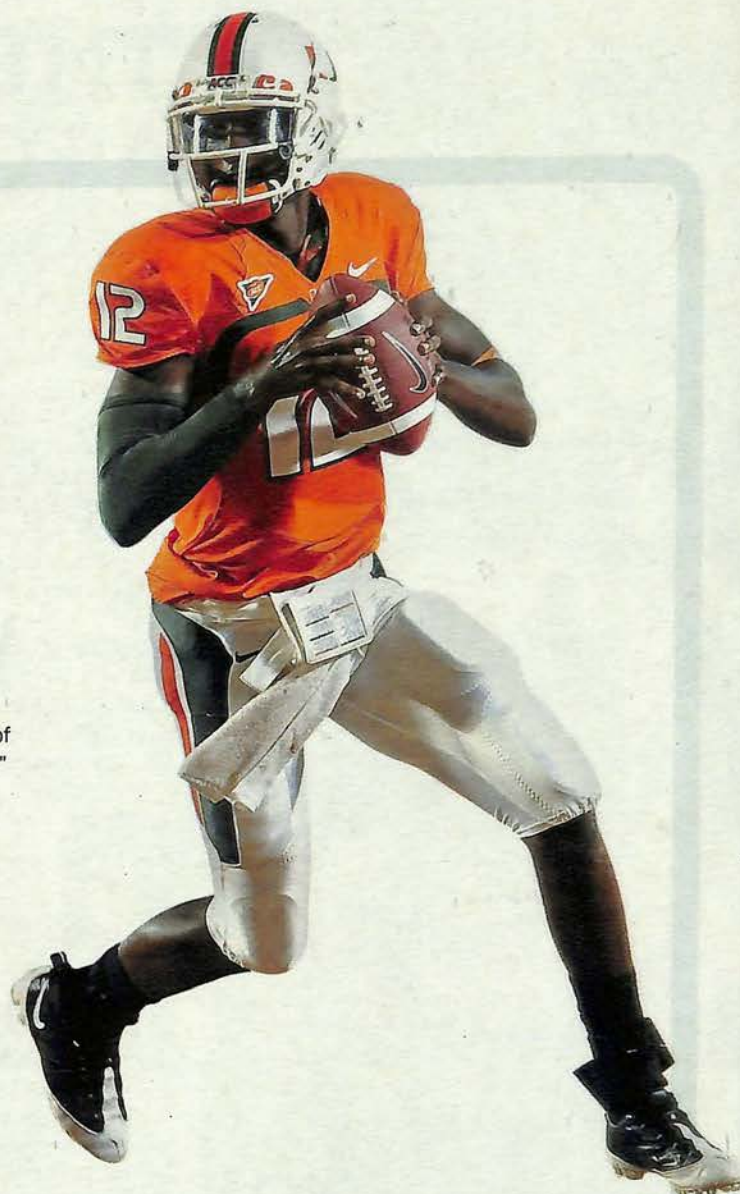
Russell Wilson, QB, N.C. State

He'll continue to balance his love for football and baseball—as he has for years. "I'm just trying to be great in whatever I try to do, whatever sport I'm playing," Wilson says. "With football, we want to win an ACC championship. Why not this year?" Wilson returned to football despite being drafted in the fourth round by the Rockies. Considering Wilson ranks fifth in school history in career passing yards and third in passing touchdowns after two seasons, his decision was not pleasant news around the ACC.

5

Mark Herzlich, LB, Boston College

The best story in college football is ready to get back on the field. Herzlich, the 2008 ACC defensive player of the year, missed all of 2009 with Ewing's sarcoma, a rare form of bone cancer. But he now is cancer-free and medically cleared to resume his all-out attacking style. "Everyone is going to want to compare this year to 2008, and that's exactly what I'm going to do, too," he says. "When I look back at it and say, 'How'd it go?', it could be OK and it could be great, but it can't be bad because I'll be back out there. That said, I don't see any reason I can't be as good as I was in 2008."



[8] PREDICTIONS

FROM MATT HAYES



Georgia Tech's Allen averaged a ridiculous 9.7 yards in only 64 carries last season.

- 1 Georgia Tech coach Paul Johnson's option offense, criticized as out of date in the BCS world, will lead the nation in rushing behind new B-back Anthony Allen.
- 2 Since the conference expanded to 12 teams, the ACC has dreamed of a Florida State-Miami matchup in the league championship game. It will finally come to fruition this year, the first time the game will be played in Charlotte.
- 3 N.C. State coach Tom O'Brien, working with a new chancellor and athletic director, will save his job by getting the Wolfpack back to the postseason.
- 4 Florida State quarterback Christian Ponder will show so much improvement and polish that he'll be the first quarterback picked in the 2011 NFL draft.
- 5 It will be the last year in College Park for the Fridge. Maryland coach Ralph Friedgen, who won 31 games in his first three years and 35 in the next six, has a new athletic director and is coming off a two-win season.
- 6 Wake Forest's Kenny Okoro is a little bigger (6-0, 195) and a little faster than former Deacons star cornerbacks Alphonso Smith and Brandon Ghee—and by the end of the season, he'll be better than both.
- 7 Boston College linebacker Mark Herzlich will be the story of the ACC as he returns from battling a rare form of cancer to reclaim the league's defensive player of the year award.
- 8 A loss at Miami will keep Virginia Tech, king of the league since it expanded to 12 teams, from the ACC championship game for the second straight season.

AND 3 MORE FROM ...

→ **Former NFL TE Rick "Doc" Walker: QB Tyrod Taylor could deliver an ACC title to Virginia Tech.** "The amount of sacks that Tyrod Taylor avoids makes him special. While the average guy is sacked, he's eluding people and throwing downfield. This guy is invaluable because he saves plays. If he continues to develop as a passer, Virginia Tech will be very difficult to beat."

→ **Former Florida State and NFL QB Peter Tom Willis: An improved defense will help the Seminoles reach 10 wins for the first time since 2003.** "Offensively, the pieces are there. Last year was probably the worst defense we've had in a really long time in Tallahassee. I think you're going to see a different type of defense, with more zone, that will bend, not break. Realistically, this is a team that could win 10 games."

→ **Former North Carolina and NFL LB Buddy Curry: Tar Heels QB T.J. Yates will reach his potential.** "This will be a bounceback year for T.J. Yates. This past year he wasn't as productive as you'd like, but he's got all the tools. He's got a good arm, he's smart, he's big enough, and he can take the hits out there."

RUSS LANDE'S TOP 5 ACC DRAFT PROSPECTS

1. Da'Quan Bowers, DE, Clemson
2. Mark Herzlich, LB, Boston College
3. Allen Bailey, DE, Miami
4. Robert Quinn, DE, North Carolina
5. Christian Ponder, QB, Florida State



— Dave Curtis, Ryan Fagan, Matt Hayes

BOWL PICKS

ORANGE

Miami vs. Wisconsin



CHICK-FIL-A

Florida State vs. Auburn



CHAMPS SPORTS

Virginia Tech vs. Notre Dame



MEINEKE CAR CARE

Georgia Tech vs. West Virginia



SUN

North Carolina vs. Arizona



MUSIC CITY

Boston College vs. Ole Miss



INDEPENDENCE

N.C. State vs. Air Force



BIG EAST

Projected finish

Pitt	6-1 (9-3)
West Virginia	5-2 (9-3)
Connecticut	4-3 (9-3)
Cincinnati	4-3 (8-4)
Rutgers	4-3 (8-4)
South Florida	3-4 (6-6)
Louisville	2-5 (6-6)
Syracuse	0-7 (3-9)

SN All-conference team

OFFENSE

QB **Tom Savage**, Soph., Rutgers
 RB **Noel Devine**, Sr., West Virginia
 RB **Dion Lewis**, Soph., Pitt
 OL **Jason Pinkston**, Sr., Pitt
 OL **Zach Hurd**, Sr., Connecticut
 OL **Jason Kelce**, Sr., Cincinnati
 OL **Sampson Genus**, Sr., South Florida
 OL **Alex Hoffman**, Jr., Cincinnati
 WR **Jonathan Baldwin**, Jr., Pitt
 WR **Armon Binns**, Sr., Cincinnati
 TE **Ben Guidugli**, Sr., Cincinnati

DEFENSE

DL **Greg Romeus**, Sr., Pitt
 DL **Chris Neild**, Sr., West Virginia
 DL **Greg Lloyd**, Sr., Connecticut
 DL **Scott Vallone**, Soph., Rutgers
 LB **Lawrence Wilson**, Sr., Connecticut
 LB **J.T. Thomas**, Sr., West Virginia
 LB **Derrell Smith**, Sr., Syracuse
 DB **Brandon Hogan**, Sr., West Virginia
 DB **Johnny Patrick**, Sr., Louisville
 DB **Robert Sands**, Jr., West Virginia
 DB **Dom DeCicco**, Sr., Pitt

SPECIALISTS

K **Tyler Bitancourt**, Soph., West Virginia
 P **Rob Long**, Sr., Syracuse



**COACH
OF THE YEAR**
Randy Edsall,
 Connecticut



**PLAYER
OF THE YEAR**
Greg Romeus,
 Pitt



5 people who will shape the conference race

➔ 1.

Zach Collaros, QB, Cincinnati

It would be hard to pick out Collaros from a group of average students. "He's not the prototype," Bearcats offensive coordinator Mike Bajakian says. Still, coaches believe the 6-0, 209-pound junior will thrive as the pilot of their offense. Bajakian and new coach Butch Jones will use a scheme similar to the one former coach Brian Kelly used last season, when Collaros averaged 6.0 yards per carry, completed 75.0 percent of his passes and threw 10 touchdowns and two interceptions as Tony Pike's backup. But with Pike, Kelly and top receiver Mardy Gilyard gone and the team's Sugar Bowl season behind it, Collaros will need to stand out to get Cincinnati a third straight league title.

2

Dion Lewis, RB, Pitt

Panthers tackle Jason Pinkston keeps flip-flopping on which Lewis run is his favorite: the right sideline sprint to seal a victory over Rutgers or a 50-yard juke-filled dash against Notre Dame. Or maybe another wow from Lewis' 1,799-yard, 17-rushing touchdown freshman season? "He's amazing to watch," Pinkston says. "He's quicker than almost everybody, and he runs just as hard as any other back." Lewis, unheralded out of high school, is an All-American candidate and the offensive fulcrum for the Big East favorites.

3

Noel Devine, RB, West Virginia

By Thanksgiving, Devine's extensive YouTube highlights collection should grow enough to create a Volume 2. "There's a lot more from where that comes from," Mountaineers receiver Jock Sanders says. "He's got some secret stuff. You better tune into the TV to find out." With West Virginia featuring a first-year starting quarterback, Devine, a senior, will be the key to the offense, and he'll have to be more consistent than he has been in the past. Look for the Mountaineers to use him as running back, slot receiver and quarterback as he tries to elevate his status—and West Virginia's—into the nation's elite.

4

Zach Hurd, G, Connecticut

Five years after arriving from high school as a 230-pound lineman, Hurd is a 6-7, 323-pounder with All-American potential and a certain NFL future. "It's been a lot of buying new clothes," Hurd says. He has helped turn an under-recruited, overachieving crew into one of the league's best rushing attacks. Another big year for the offensive line—as a sophomore last season, Jordan Todman rushed for 1,188 yards—could help the Huskies contend for a Big East championship.

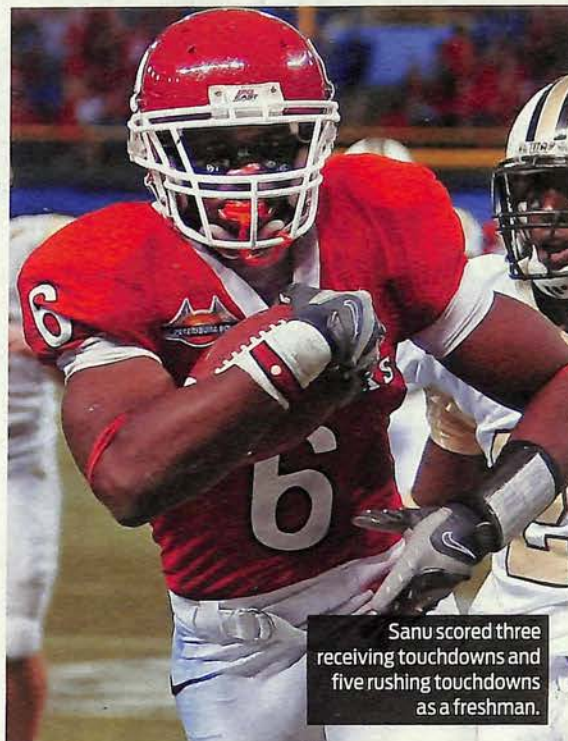
5

Mohamed Sanu, WR, Rutgers

He went from so-so to star over the final three games of his freshman season last year, averaging 8.2 yards per touch and scoring six touchdowns. He excelled in the Wildcat formation and developed into fellow freshman Tom Savage's top outside target. This season, whether Rutgers can challenge for the league title will hinge on Sanu's development. "I'm sure Coach (Greg Schiano) has big plans for me," he says. "We can be really good on offense."

[8]

PREDICTIONS FROM MATT HAYES



Sanu scored three receiving touchdowns and five rushing touchdowns as a freshman.

- 1 Cincinnati, winner of 12 straight Big East games, will make it 15 in a row before eventually losing three this fall.
- 2 Ryne Giddins will be the Big East defensive freshman of the year. The athletic and physical South Florida end, who was granted a medical redshirt last year after an ankle injury ended his season, spurned Florida, Florida State and Miami to join the Bulls.
- 3 Pitt will lose nonconference games to Utah and Miami, but the Panthers will rebound to win the program's first outright conference championship.
- 4 After three seasons of ineptitude, Louisville's defense will rank among the top three in the Big East, thanks to defense-minded new coach Charlie Strong and rising star coordinator Vance Bedford.
- 5 With the carrot of NFL dollars in sight, West Virginia running back Noel Devine will significantly increase his production in the last month of the season, and his uneven college career will fade in the rearview.
- 6 Rutgers receiver Mohamed Sanu will become the Big East's biggest threat when the Scarlet Knights start to use him much like Florida used Percy Harvin two years ago.
- 7 Another strong finish and another bowl season will make UConn coach Randy Edsall a hot commodity. Only this time, UConn won't be able to keep him from a bigger job.

- 8 Syracuse will lose to Louisville, Rutgers, UConn and Boston College in November, dropping its record in that month to 3-19 since longtime coach Paul Pasqualoni was fired after the 2004 season.

AND 3 MORE FROM ...

→ **Former West Virginia and Los Angeles Rams RB Robert Alexander: Mountaineers RB Noel Devine will have his best season yet.** "If he keeps his head on straight, much more will happen for him. I'm sure he'll get to 1,000 yards as usual. I don't know how West Virginia's passing attack will be. That would open up Noel Devine a whole lot more. ... But I don't think he has the size or the power to carry the team on his back."

→ **Pitt LB Max Gruder: Despite huge personnel losses, Pitt's defense won't take a step back.** "We are losing five (defensive starters), but most of the people who are stepping in—such as (tackle) Myles Caragein, (tackle) Chas Alecxih, (cornerback) Antwan Reed—they all got a good amount of playing time last year, so it's not going to be a big drop-off."

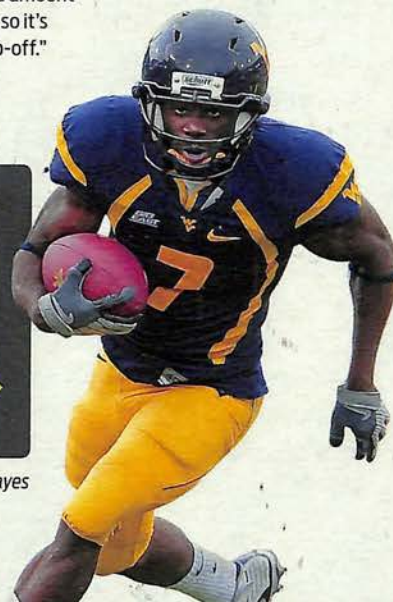
→ **Former Syracuse coach Dick MacPherson: South Florida is a sleeper.** "I'd watch out for South Florida. Not necessarily because of the (coaching) change, but just because it's South Florida. Eventually, they're going to win this thing."

RUSS LANDE'S TOP 5 BIG EAST DRAFT PROSPECTS

1. Greg Romeus, DE, Pitt
2. Jabaal Sheard, DE, Pitt
3. Lawrence Wilson, LB, Connecticut
4. Noel Devine, RB, West Virginia
5. Jason Pinkston, OT, Pitt



— Matt Crossman, Dave Curtis, Matt Hayes



BOWL PICKS

FIESTA

Pitt vs. Texas



MEINEKE CAR CARE

West Virginia vs. Georgia Tech



BEEF 'O' BRADY'S

Connecticut vs. Southern Miss



PINSTRIPES

Rutgers vs. Colorado



PAPAJOHNS.COM

Cincinnati vs. Bowling Green



EAGLEBANK

South Florida vs. East Carolina



NEW MEXICO

Louisville vs. Louisiana Tech



BIG TEN

Projected finish

Ohio State	8-0 (12-0)
Wisconsin	7-1 (11-1)
Iowa	6-2 (9-3)
Penn State	5-3 (8-4)
Purdue	4-4 (8-4)
Northwestern	4-4 (8-4)
Michigan State	3-5 (6-6)
Michigan	3-5 (5-7)
Illinois	2-6 (3-9)
Indiana	1-7 (5-7)
Minnesota	1-7 (2-10)

SN All-conference team

OFFENSE

QB **Terrelle Pryor**, Jr., Ohio State
 RB **John Clay**, Jr., Wisconsin
 RB **Evan Royster**, Sr., Penn State
 OL **Stefen Wisniewski**, Sr., Penn State
 OL **John Moffitt**, Sr., Wisconsin
 OL **Joel Foreman**, Jr., Michigan State
 OL **Justin Boren**, Sr., Ohio State
 OL **Stephen Schilling**, Sr., Michigan
 WR **Tandon Doss**, Jr., Indiana
 WR **Keith Smith**, Sr., Purdue
 TE **Charlie Gantt**, Sr., Michigan State

DEFENSE

DL **Cameron Heyward**, Sr., Ohio State
 DL **Adrian Clayborn**, Sr., Iowa
 DL **Ryan Kerrigan**, Sr., Purdue
 DL **Jerel Worthy**, Soph., Michigan State
 LB **Ross Homan**, Sr., Ohio State
 LB **Quentin Davie**, Sr., Northwestern
 LB **Greg Jones**, Sr., Michigan State
 DB **Tyler Sash**, Jr., Iowa
 DB **Jay Valai**, Sr., Wisconsin
 DB **Chimdi Chekwa**, Sr., Ohio State
 DB **Drew Astorino**, Sr., Penn State

SPECIALISTS

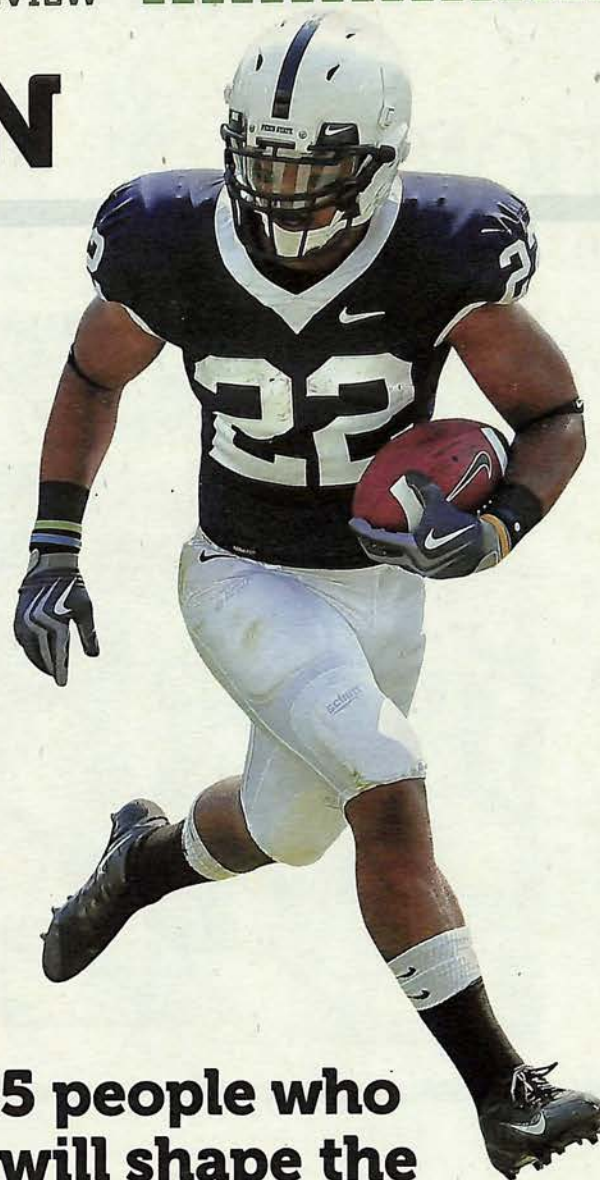
P **Brad Nortman**, Jr., Wisconsin
 K **Stefan Demos**, Sr., Northwestern



COACH OF THE YEAR
Jim Tressel,
 Ohio State



PLAYER OF THE YEAR
Adrian Clayborn,
 Iowa



5 people who will shape the conference race

➔ 1.

Evan Royster, RB, Penn State

He needed a sabbatical. So instead of spending another summer sweating in State College, Royster spent a month at home near Washington, D.C., retooling his body and recharging his mind. "I came back," the senior says, "and I felt like I was a freshman again." With questions along the offensive line and a new starting quarterback set to take over, a healthy Royster could reach 300 carries in 2010. "I don't know if it will be to that scale," he says. "But I could see myself getting it more."

2

Adrian Clayborn, DE, Iowa

Big-Game Clayborn? Last year, he had a game-changing blocked punt at Penn State. He had a career-high 12 tackles, including three for losses, at Ohio State. And he almost single-handedly shut down Georgia Tech's option attack with nine solo tackles and two sacks. If Iowa is going to become a national title contender, Clayborn's big-plays-in-big-games streak needs to continue. "He has a chance to have a season like (Nebraska's Ndamukong) Suh had last year," former Iowa star and College Football Hall of Famer Larry Station says. "He's going to be the first pick in the draft."

3

Rich Rodriguez, coach, Michigan

Rodriguez enters the season in survival mode after a disastrous 8-16 start to his Michigan career. But even those paid to beat him believe his fortunes will turn. "I've known Rich for a long time," Wisconsin coach Bret Bielema says. "He's going to get it done there. It's going to help the league." But it won't be easy. He'll have a highly publicized quarterback controversy to sort out and needs the defense to rebound from an awful 2009.

4

Terrelle Pryor, QB, Ohio State

Inconsistency has plagued this megarecruit's two-year career, with a sidarm delivery or one-hop pass offsetting every flash of greatness. "Mechanically, he is nowhere near where we want him to be," Buckeyes quarterbacks coach Nick Siciliano says. "But the good thing is that he's always here, trying to learn." Terrific teammates, led by three All-Big Ten caliber interior linemen, will continue to boost expectations at Ohio State, but the Buckeyes will play for a national title only if Pryor is consistent over 12 games.

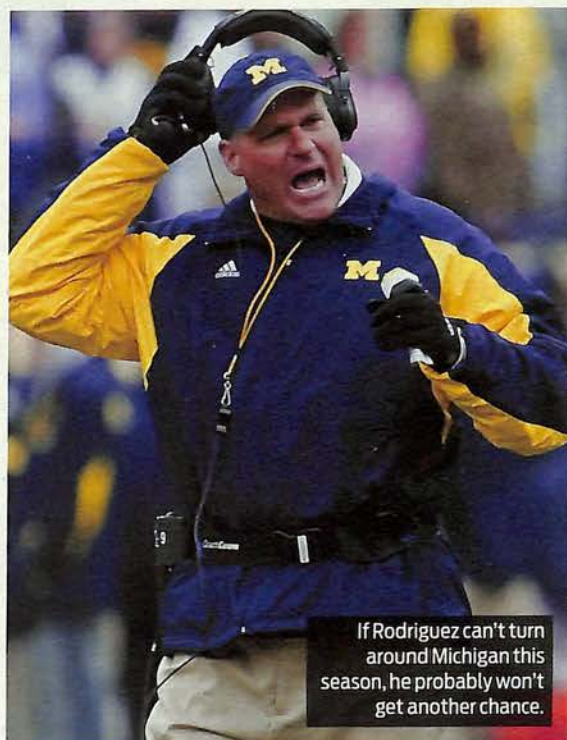
5

Jay Valai, S, Wisconsin

The Badgers lose a lot on defense: first team All-Big Ten end O'Brien Schofield, plus Jaeverly McFadden at linebacker and Chris Maragos in the secondary. So the team is counting on Valai, a two-year starter and a big hitter, to join linebacker Chris Borland, the 2009 Big Ten freshman of the year, as the new anchors of the unit. "Everybody knows Wisconsin for the physical offense," Valai says. "We've got to be that physical on defense, too."

[8] PREDICTIONS

FROM MATT HAYES



If Rodriguez can't turn around Michigan this season, he probably won't get another chance.

1 Rich Rodriguez, the coach who was supposed to transform Michigan with his 21st century offense, will struggle again to win games in Ann Arbor—and lose his job in the process.

2 Robert Marve had trouble beating out Jacory Harris for the quarterback job at Miami, but he will thrive in an underrated Purdue offense full of speed and dynamic ability.

3 The Big Ten will lose its spot in the Rose Bowl when Ohio State advances to the BCS national championship game, and the Rose Bowl—bound by BCS contractual obligations—will choose Boise State to play Pac-10 champion Oregon.

4 The Big Ten will have four new coaches in 2011. Rodriguez, Illinois' Ron Zook and Minnesota's Tim Brewster will be fired, and Bo Pelini will join the group when Nebraska enters the league.

5 Tate Forcier, the hot-and-cold freshman of a year ago, will lose his job as Michigan's starting quarterback to a combination of sophomore Denard Robinson and freshman Devin Gardner.

6 Penn State sophomore Michael Mauti, who missed all of the 2009 season with an ACL injury, will win the starting middle linebacker job in fall camp and develop into the Lions' next great linebacker.

7 Ohio State quarterback Terrelle Pryor will earn a spot at the Heisman Trophy

ceremony with three big games in victories over Penn State, Michigan and Iowa.

8 Despite November losses to Penn State, Wisconsin and Iowa, Northwestern will set a school record with its third straight bowl appearance.

AND 3 MORE FROM ...

→ Michigan State LB Greg Jones: **Spartans quarterback-turned-receiver Keith Nichol will be a difference-maker.** "He can truly play. He was on the scout team during bowl prep, and some days you'd just say, 'Wow. He's really going to tear it up next year.' And, remember, he can still do all the things a quarterback does."

→ Indiana coach Bill Lynch: **The Hoosiers' defense will improve.** "There's no question we can be better on defense. The biggest thing is that we've got a completely different personality. (End) Darius Johnson is healthy with his shoulder. ... We've got some talent and personality we haven't had before."

→ Northwestern OT Al Netter: **The Wildcats' offense will be surprising.** "People are going to see a style change for us. Our quarterback is going to be more mobile. As a goal for the offensive line, I would love to have a 1,000-yard rusher. That's the mark of a great offensive line."



RUSS LANDE'S TOP 5 BIG TEN DRAFT PROSPECTS

1. Cameron Heyward, DT, Ohio State
2. Adrian Clayborn, DE, Iowa
3. Brian Rolle, LB, Ohio State
4. Ross Homan, LB, Ohio State
5. Greg Jones, LB, Michigan State

— Dave Curtis, Matt Hayes

BOWL PICKS

BCS CHAMPIONSHIP

Ohio State vs. Alabama



ORANGE

Wisconsin vs. Miami



CAPITAL ONE

Iowa vs. Arkansas



OUTBACK

Penn State vs. Georgia



INSIGHT

Purdue vs. Texas A&M



GATOR

Northwestern vs. South Carolina



TEXAS

Michigan State vs. Baylor



BIG 12

Projected finish

North

Nebraska	8-0 (11-1)
Kansas	5-3 (7-5)
Missouri	4-4 (8-4)
Colorado	3-5 (6-6)
Iowa State	2-6 (4-8)
Kansas State	1-7 (4-8)

South

Texas	7-1 (11-1)
Oklahoma	6-2 (10-2)
Texas A&M	4-4 (7-5)
Texas Tech	3-5 (6-6)
Baylor	3-5 (6-6)
Oklahoma State	2-6 (5-7)

SN All-conference team

OFFENSE

QB **Jerrold Johnson**, Sr., Texas A&M
 RB **Kendall Hunter**, Sr., Oklahoma State
 RB **Daniel Thomas**, Sr., Kansas State
 OL **Kyle Hix**, Sr., Texas
 OL **Nate Solder**, Sr., Colorado
 OL **Ryan Miller**, Jr., Colorado
 OL **Dan Hoch**, Jr., Missouri
 OL **Tanner Hawkinson**, Soph., Kansas
 WR **Ryan Broyles**, Jr., Oklahoma
 WR **Scotty McKnight**, Sr., Colorado
 TE **Mike McNeill**, Sr., Nebraska

DEFENSE

DL **Aldon Smith**, Soph., Missouri
 DL **Jeremy Beal**, Sr., Oklahoma
 DL **Jared Crick**, Jr., Nebraska
 DL **Sam Acho**, Sr., Texas
 LB **Von Miller**, Sr., Texas A&M
 LB **Travis Lewis**, Jr., Oklahoma
 LB **Bront Bird**, Sr., Texas Tech
 DB **Curtis Brown**, Sr., Texas
 DB **Markelle Martin**, Jr., Oklahoma State
 DB **Prince Amukamara**, Sr., Nebraska
 DB **Emmanuel Lamur**, Jr., Kansas State

SPECIALISTS

P **Tress Way**, Soph., Oklahoma
 K **Grant Ressel**, Jr., Missouri



COACH OF THE YEAR
Bo Pelini,
 Nebraska



PLAYER OF THE YEAR
Jared Crick,
 Nebraska

5 people who will shape the conference race

➔ 1.

Landry Jones, QB, Oklahoma

In 45 seconds of conversation, the sophomore used the word *dominant* three times. The fourth time summed up OU's goals this season: "We were thankful to be in the Sun Bowl last year. But we're here for championships. To win national championships and be a dominant team." The Sooners won't rule the Big 12 if Jones repeats the 14 interceptions he threw as a freshman. But he's confident his encore will be better, thanks to a wealth of playmakers. "Looking at last year, it's one or two plays I could make to make a huge difference," Jones says. "I have to make them this year."

2

Sam Acho, DE, Texas

Acho wants his photo to make a meeting-room wall. Each day, the senior says, he looks up at images of great Longhorns past and draws inspiration. "Brian Orakpo, Sergio Kindle, Brian Robinson, Tim Crowder," Acho says. "Those are the guys who set the standard for playing at Texas." After watching Orakpo and Kindle earn All-American status the past two years, Acho will get his chance in 2010. He led UT with 10 sacks last year and might spend some time inside this year to offset the Longhorns' weakness at tackle. "I can be versatile," he says.

3

Tommy Tuberville, coach, Texas Tech

The Red Raiders now run from drill to drill at practice. Their dress and grooming in meetings and workouts is monitored. Change is everywhere inside Texas Tech football, with Tuberville trying to create a more demanding environment than Mike Leach did with a low-key approach. "It's nice for the guys to have the feeling of being adults for a change," senior defensive tackle Colby Whitlock says. A tweaked offense and overhauled defense are indications the changes don't stop where the field starts. One more good Tuberville decision—choosing a quarterback between Taylor Potts and Steven Sheffield—could make the Red Raiders a Big 12 sleeper.

4

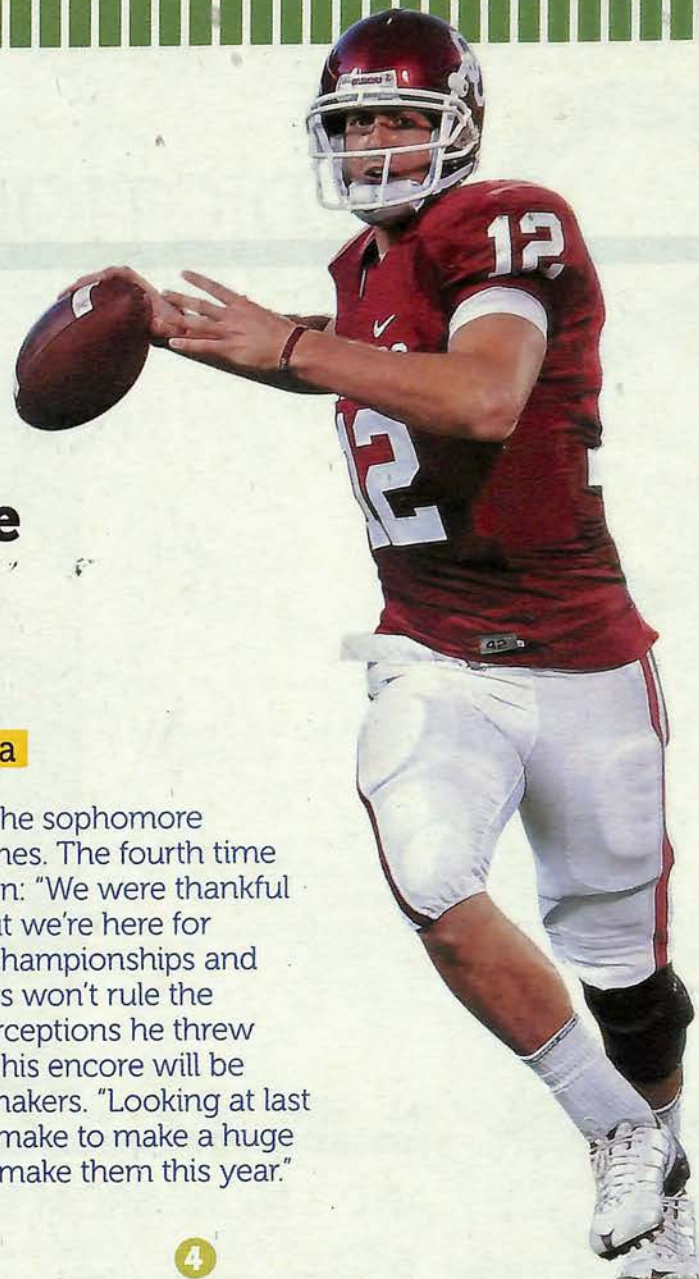
Blaine Gabbert, QB, Missouri

He needed a few workouts to adjust. Missouri's strength coaches had asked Gabbert to start pulling TRX machine ropes and bands at odd angles. *What kind of training is this, anyway?* "It turned out great," he says. "The staff did a great job getting me stronger with less strain on my shoulder." Gabbert maintained his 235-pound playing weight yet dropped his body fat by 4 percent. Throw in summer sessions with quarterback guru Bob Johnson and Gabbert is set to lead Missouri's challenge against North Division favorite Nebraska.

5

Jared Crick, DT, Nebraska

Go ahead and mention Ndamukong Suh every time Crick's name comes up. Crick doesn't know how things will go without an All-American—the second pick in the NFL draft—lining up beside him. He only knows the post-Suh goal remains the same: become the most athletic defensive tackle in the country. So Crick, as usual, folded some speed workouts usually reserved for defensive backs into his offseason training. "You see so many huge guys who can't move and just plug holes," Crick says. "We want to come off blocks and make plays, like Suh. We don't want to just be meatheads."



[8] PREDICTIONS

FROM MATT HAYES



Gilbert may not have Colt McCoy's experience, but he's talented enough to do great things at Texas.

1 Consider this scenario: Texas beats Oklahoma, Nebraska beats Texas, and the Longhorns get revenge on the Huskers in the Big 12 championship game. Then OU jumps Nebraska for the league's second BCS bid, thanks to a tougher schedule. And the Huskers wind up in the Cotton Bowl.

2 Speedy Colorado receiver Toney Clemons, a Michigan transfer, will lead the Big 12 in yards per catch and energize an offense that will get the Buffs back in the postseason.

3 K-State's Daniel Thomas will lead the nation in rushing and be the first running back picked in the 2011 NFL draft.

4 Oklahoma State will finish last in the South, and coach Mike Gundy will be forced out. Next in line in Stillwater: former Texas Tech coach Mike Leach.

5 When Baylor coach Art Briles and quarterback Robert Griffin—the game's most exciting player—lead the Bears to the postseason for the first time since 1994, Briles will be a hot commodity for major BCS schools looking for a coach.

6 Oklahoma's recent string of dominant interior defensive linemen will continue with sophomore Jamarkus McFarland, a 6-2, 293-pound combination of run stuffer and pass rusher.

7 After two months of learning and adjusting to Big 12 defenses, Texas quarterback Garrett Gilbert will get hot in

November—against a relatively soft homestretch: at Kansas State, Oklahoma State, then Florida Atlantic and Texas A&M at home.

8 Texas A&M's quick start will end with three losses in November: at Baylor, at home against Nebraska and at Texas.

AND 3 MORE FROM ...

→ **Former Nebraska and NFL DE Grant Wistrom: Nebraska will make the most of its last season in the Big 12.** "I hope (Nebraska) beats the hell out of Texas. That's the one reason I'm glad we're (getting) out of the Big 12, to be away from Texas. There was so much done to get them to join the Big 12, and you can see they're still calling the shots. I'm sick of everybody falling at the foot of the king."

→ **Missouri CB Kevin Rutland: Tigers DE Aldon Smith will be even better as a sophomore.** "Aldon Smith is not normal. You just don't see guys at that size (6-5, 260) with that kind of speed do things like he does. And he's spent the whole spring getting stronger and quicker. I can't wait to see what he does this year."

→ **Kansas State S Tysyn Hartman: Wildcats RB Daniel Thomas will be one of the best players in the league.** "We need to rely on Daniel Thomas this year. You see him out on the field lined up at running back, and he's bigger (6-2, 228) than some of the linebackers. It's nice to have a guy like that."

RUSS LANDE'S TOP 5 BIG 12 DRAFT PROSPECTS

1. Von Miller, LB, Texas A&M
2. Prince Amukamara, CB, Nebraska
3. Nate Solder, OT, Colorado
4. Jared Crick, DT, Nebraska
5. DeMarco Murray, RB, Oklahoma

— Dave Curtis, Matt Hayes



BOWL PICKS

FIESTA

Texas vs. Pitt



SUGAR

Oklahoma vs. Florida



COTTON

Nebraska vs. LSU



ALAMO

Missouri vs. Oregon State



INSIGHT

Texas A&M vs. Purdue



HOLIDAY

Kansas vs. Washington



DALLAS FOOTBALL CLASSIC

Texas Tech vs. Tulsa



PINSTRIPES

Colorado vs. Rutgers



TEXAS

Baylor vs. Michigan State



PAC-10

Projected finish

Oregon	8-1 (11-1)
Oregon State	7-2 (8-4)
USC	6-3 (10-3)
Washington	6-3 (9-3)
Arizona	5-4 (8-4)
UCLA	4-5 (6-6)
Stanford	4-5 (6-6)
California	3-6 (5-7)
Arizona State	2-7 (4-8)
Washington State	0-9 (1-11)

SN All-conference team

OFFENSE

QB **Jake Locker**, Sr., Washington
 RB **Jacquizz Rodgers**, Jr., Oregon State
 RB **LaMichael James**, Soph., Oregon
 OL **Chase Beeler**, Sr., Stanford
 OL **Colin Baxter**, Sr., Arizona
 OL **Tyron Smith**, Jr., USC
 OL **Bo Thran**, Sr., Oregon
 OL **Butch Lewis**, Sr., USC
 WR **Jermaine Kearse**, Jr., Washington
 WR **James Rodgers**, Sr., Oregon State
 TE **Anthony Miller**, Jr., California

DEFENSE

DL **Stephen Paea**, Sr., Oregon State
 DL **Kenny Rowe**, Sr., Oregon
 DL **Jurrell Casey**, Jr., USC
 DL **Sione Fua**, Sr., Stanford
 LB **Casey Matthews**, Sr., Oregon
 LB **Vontaze Burfict**, Soph., Arizona State
 LB **Akeem Ayers**, Jr., UCLA
 DB **Shareece Wright**, Sr., USC
 DB **Trevin Wade**, Jr., Arizona
 DB **Rahim Moore**, Jr., UCLA
 DB **Sean Cattouse**, Jr., California

SPECIALISTS

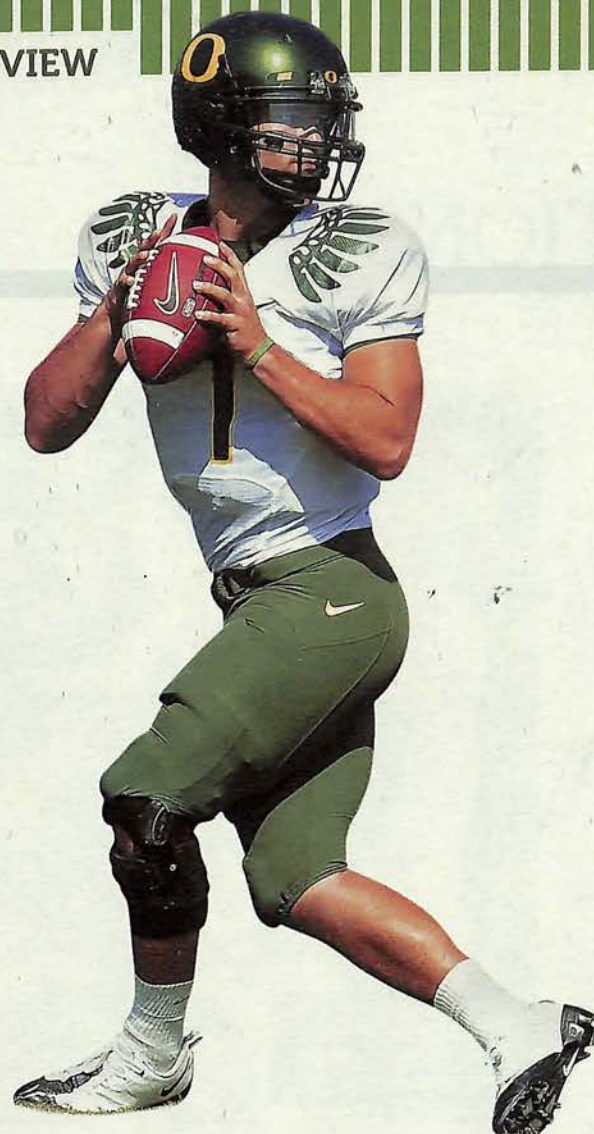
K **Kai Forbath**, Sr., UCLA
 P **Bryan Anger**, Jr., California



COACH OF THE YEAR
Chip Kelly, Oregon



PLAYER OF THE YEAR
Jacquizz Rodgers, Oregon State



5 people who will shape the conference race

➔ 1.

Nate Costa, QB, Oregon

He is finally getting his chance to start on the Pac-10's most talented team, but this goes way beyond football. It's about a fifth-year senior leader holding together a potential championship team away from the field. "We have to change the way people think about Oregon football right now," says Costa, who was thrust into the starting role after Heisman Trophy candidate Jeremiah Masoli was kicked off the team. "That's as important as any win. If we live the right way off the field, we'll have success on it."

2

Dillon Baxter, RB, USC

Believe it or not, there was a moment this spring when the talk around USC wasn't of new coaches or old coaches or NCAA probation. It was just football—including how magnificent freshman Dillon Baxter was making the Trojans' defense look silly and giving the offense the consistent, dynamic threat it lacked last season. "At one point, after one run," USC quarterback Matt Barkley says, "I heard coach (Lane) Kiffin say, 'Hey, put that one up on YouTube.' (Baxter) did some incredible things, and he hasn't even played a game." The jewel of Kiffin's first recruiting class, Baxter reminds USC folks of Reggie Bush—but in a good way, with unthinkable speed, moves and game-breaking ability.

3

Stephen Paea, DT, Oregon State

The video is a YouTube smash: muscle-bound Paea lying on the bench press in the Oregon State weight room and throwing up 225 pounds an unthinkable 44 times. "I can do more now," the senior says. The NFL uses the 225-pound bench press as a gauge of strength during draft evaluations, but that won't be needed for Paea. Just watch him control the interior and draw double-teams and there's little doubt of his strength and ability, which will be key to the Beavers' defense overcoming the mistakes that come with having a first-year starter at quarterback. "(Ndamukong) Suh kind of opened eyes to D-linemen last year," Paea says. "That motivates me to beat his status."

4

Jermaine Kearse, WR, Washington

There's an art to it, a ballet of sorts when a few seconds of survival become a graceful, purposeful show. "When the ball is in the air," Kearse says, "it's mine. I use everything I can to get that ball." And to think Washington's physical, confident star was buried on the depth chart as a sophomore in camp last fall because of too many drops. Now he's one of the nation's best receivers, a player who can stretch defenses and allow the running game more room to operate—which will go a long way in giving UW the offensive balance it lacked last season.

5

Stepfan Taylor, RB, Stanford

Those moments as a freshman on the bench last year, when Toby Gerhart was churning through 25-plus-carry games and All-American performances, provided perspective for Taylor. "You could tell," Taylor says, "that every carry meant something to him. No matter how big or small, it's all about how badly you want it." Taylor brings a wallop, too—he's 5-11, 208, and he pounded his way to 5.4 yards per carry as Gerhart's primary backup last season. He may not carry the entire load—Tyler Gaffney will also get carries—but his emergence as a steady pile mover will keep pressure off blossoming star quarterback Andrew Luck.

[8] PREDICTIONS

FROM MATT HAYES

1 It may not be Student Body Right, but the power running game and play-action passing will make a comeback in the Pac-10. Even at Oregon, where the spread is king, much of the option runs will be downhill schemes with zone blocking.

2 The wunderkind himself, Lane Kiffin, is back at USC. He'll take essentially the same roster Pete Carroll had—with a few impact freshmen sprinkled in—and win more games than Carroll did last season.

3 Washington, two years removed from a winless season and irrelevant since 2001, will win nine games and make a statement under coach Steve Sarkisian: The program has returned.

4 Arizona State, considered a plum job by most in the coaching fraternity, will suffer through a third straight losing season—and fifth in the past 10 years.

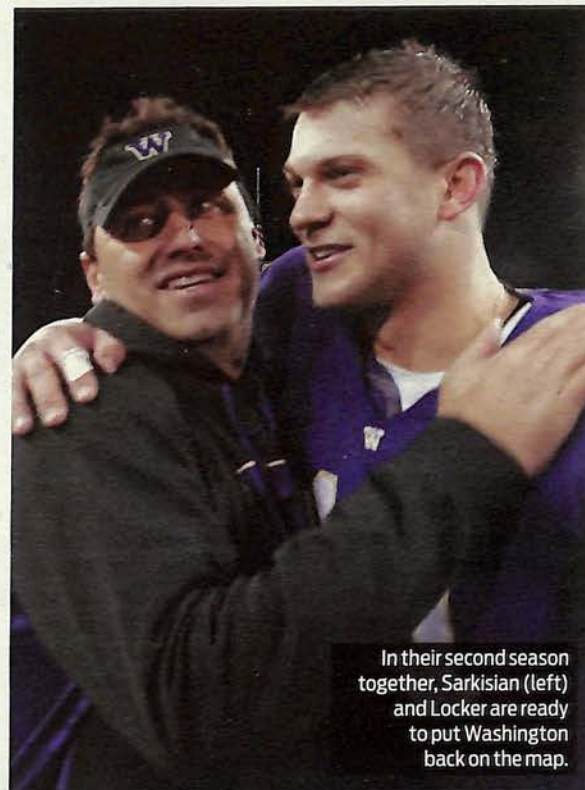
5 Another awful season will cost Washington State coach Paul Wulff his job. Idaho's Robb Akey, a former Wazzu assistant, will be his replacement.

6 UCLA quarterback Kevin Prince will play better and the UCLA offense will score more points, but the Bruins still won't move ahead of USC in the standings—even though the gap (on and off the field) is closing quickly.

7 Oregon will rebound from an October 30 loss at USC, rolling through November unbeaten, handing Oregon State its third straight defeat in

the Civil War and capturing the league title.

8 Cal quarterback Kevin Riley, who has struggled in big games, will close his career by losing two of his last three (at home vs. Oregon and Washington), but he'll get a big victory in the Big Game against Stanford.



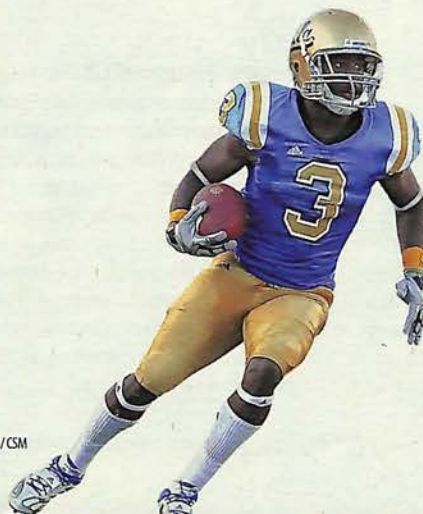
In their second season together, Sarkisian (left) and Locker are ready to put Washington back on the map.

AND 3 MORE FROM ...

→ FSN analyst and former USC RB Petros Papadakis: **Stanford coach Jim Harbaugh won't stick around long.** "The Fighting Harbaughs have a good shot to win the conference, along with Oregon and Oregon State. ... Harbaugh will stay at Stanford as long as quarterback Andrew Luck does. And Luck is eligible for the NFL (draft) next April."

→ ESPN analyst and former Stanford DB Rod Gilmore: **The Pac-10 will have the best quarterbacks in the nation.** "At least six should have NFL careers—including the nation's two best QBs and likely top overall draft choices, Jake Locker and Andrew Luck. ... The RB reign is now over. It's a QB conference once again."

→ FSN analyst and former Washington and NFL QB Brock Huard: **There will be a lot of upsets.** "I wouldn't be surprised if a conference champion comes from the middle of the pack. Oregon and USC are the two most talented teams in the league and are the preseason favorites. But there's a group of five or six teams behind them that all have their strengths."



RUSS LANDE'S TOP 5 PAC-10 DRAFT PROSPECTS

1. Andrew Luck, QB, Stanford
2. Jake Locker, QB, Washington
3. Stephen Paea, DT, Oregon State
4. Rahim Moore, S, UCLA
5. Akeem Ayers, LB, UCLA

— Matt Crossman, Matt Hayes

BOWL PICKS

ROSE

Oregon vs. Boise State



ALAMO

Oregon State vs. Missouri



HOLIDAY

Washington vs. Kansas



SUN

Arizona vs. North Carolina



LAS VEGAS

UCLA vs. TCU



KRAFT FIGHT HUNGER

Stanford vs. Nevada



SEC

Projected finish

East

Florida	6-2 (10-2)
Georgia	4-4 (8-4)
South Carolina	3-5 (7-5)
Tennessee	2-6 (5-7)
Kentucky	2-6 (5-7)
Vanderbilt	1-7 (3-9)

West

Alabama	7-1 (11-1)
Auburn	6-2 (10-2)
LSU	6-2 (9-3)
Arkansas	6-2 (10-2)
Ole Miss	3-5 (7-5)
Mississippi State	2-6 (6-6)

SN All-conference team

OFFENSE

QB **Ryan Mallett**, Jr., Arkansas
 RB **Mark Ingram**, Jr., Alabama
 RB/WR **Randall Cobb**, Jr., Kentucky
 OL **Lee Ziemba**, Sr., Auburn
 OL **Clint Boling**, Sr., Georgia
 OL **Mike Pouncey**, Sr., Florida
 OL **Barrett Jones**, Soph., Alabama
 OL **Derek Sherrod**, Sr., Mississippi State
 WR **Julio Jones**, Jr., Alabama
 WR **A.J. Green**, Jr., Georgia
 TE **D.J. Williams**, Sr., Arkansas

DEFENSE

DL **Montori Hughes**, Soph., Tennessee
 DL **Cliff Matthews**, Sr., South Carolina
 DL **Pernell McPhee**, Sr., Mississippi State
 DL **Jerrell Powe**, Sr., Ole Miss
 LB **Kelvin Sheppard**, Sr., LSU
 LB **Josh Byrnes**, Sr., Alabama
 LB **Dont'a Hightower**, Jr., Alabama
 DB **Patrick Peterson**, Jr., LSU
 DB **Janoris Jenkins**, Jr., Florida
 DB **Ahmad Black**, Sr., Florida
 DB **Mark Barron**, Jr., Alabama

SPECIALISTS

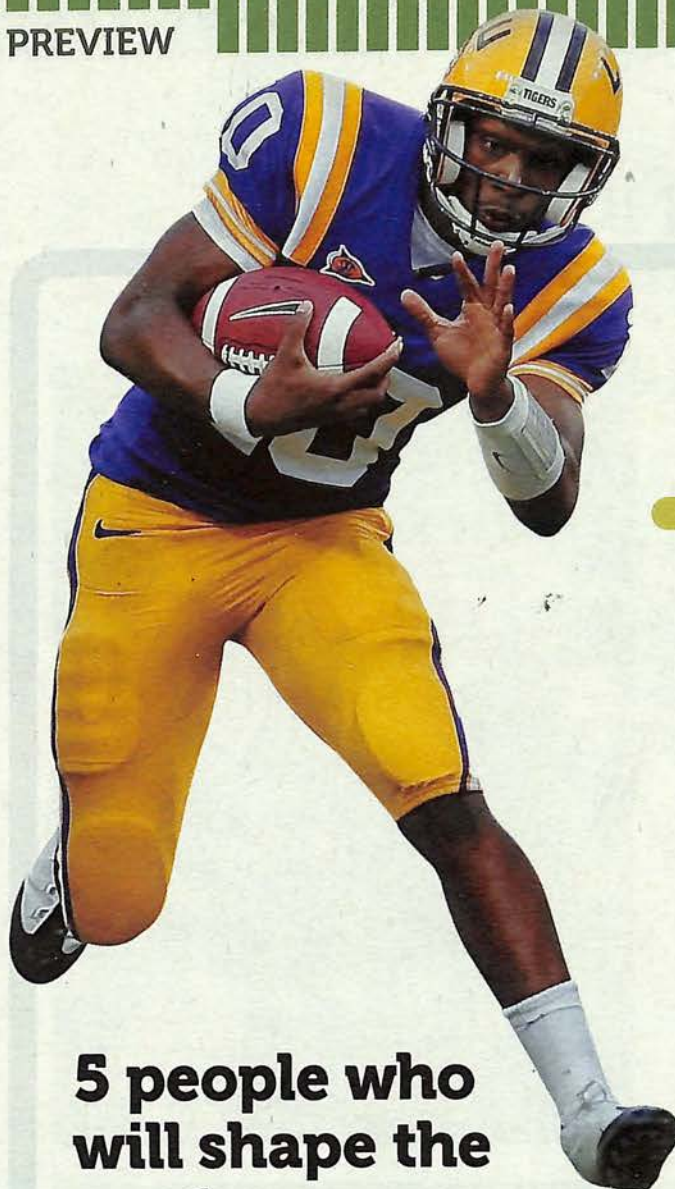
K **Wes Byrum**, Sr., Auburn
 P **Drew Butler**, Jr., Georgia



COACH OF THE YEAR
Nick Saban, Alabama



PLAYER OF THE YEAR
Ryan Mallett, QB, Arkansas



→ 3.

Russell Shepard, WR, LSU

Ladies and gentlemen, we give you Patrick Peterson, the nation's best cornerback and an astute talent evaluator of the wide receiver position. Who else to ask about Shepard—the onetime future at quarterback for LSU—moving to wideout this spring? “He’s a natural,” Peterson says. “Some guys, when they make position changes, you can tell it’s not a good fit. He’s smooth.” LSU finally has a spot for Shepard, who muddled through last season while the staff tried to work him into the offense. The goal this fall is to find mismatches in the slot or on the outside.

5 people who will shape the conference race

1

Dont'a Hightower, LB, Alabama

Let's see if this is enough pressure on Hightower: He's nearly 11 months removed from reconstructive knee surgery, and he's the unquestioned leader of a revamped Alabama defense that's the only obstacle to back-to-back national championships. “I’m sure there will be nerves early on. How could there not be?” Hightower says. “But I’ll be full-go that first game. I’ll be all over the field.” He’s not kidding. Tide defensive coordinator Kirby Smart has schemes that will use Hightower in the middle, on the outside and as a rush end—to give him maximum impact on the game.

2

Ryan Mallett, QB, Arkansas

This summer, Mallett has been in the pool more than on the field thanks to offseason foot surgery—and the pool is no place to prepare for facing defending champion Alabama in September. “I feel like I’m going to try out for the Olympics in 2014,” jokes Mallett, SN’s first-team All-American quarterback. “I’m going to give it a shot.” How about dealing with Alabama first? Mallett’s passing (3,624 yards last year) combined with an experienced offense and a wild home atmosphere could equal Alabama’s first regular-season league loss since Auburn in 2007.

4

Todd Grantham, defensive coordinator, Georgia

If he weren’t so loyal, maybe Mark Richt wouldn’t have job security issues right now. Maybe he would’ve made a change at defensive coordinator a year ago. That’s why the hiring of Grantham this offseason was so critical. It infused the defense with a different attitude and scheme (from the 4-3 to the increasingly SEC-popular 3-4) and may have bought Richt time. “The reason I am here is to make our defense better,” Grantham says. “How or why it happened is irrelevant. One thing is certain: We will be better.” They had better be: Richt lost his biggest supporter when athletic director Damon Evans resigned this summer after a DUI arrest.

5

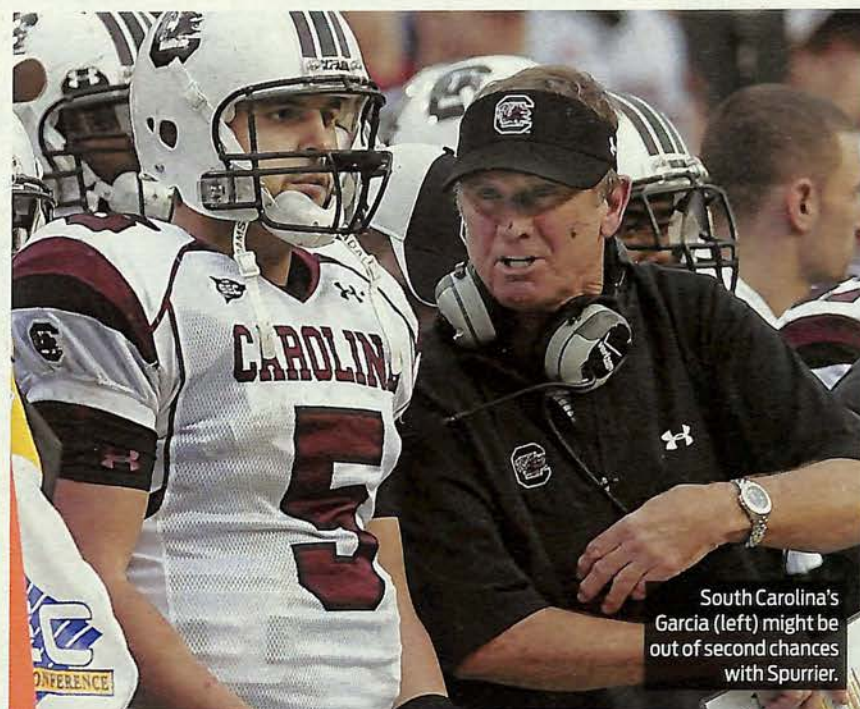
Jelani Jenkins, LB, Florida

The Gators took the field for the spring game and there was Jenkins, the megarecruit forgotten so quickly, starting at middle linebacker. “When I was redshirting, part of me definitely was saying, ‘Hey, don’t forget about me,’” he says. Jenkins sat out last year with an ankle injury and began spring drills behind Jon Bostic. A redshirt freshman, Jenkins won the job in the spring, and Bostic likely will move outside to get them on the field together. In Jenkins, it appears Florida is grooming yet another All-American at middle linebacker. “The fun part,” says new Florida defensive coordinator Teryl Austin, “will be watching him get better week after week.”

[8] PREDICTIONS

FROM MATT HAYES

- 1 Florida coach Urban Meyer, who has done more to advance the growth of the spread option offense than any coach, will throw more than run with new quarterback John Brantley.
- 2 Auburn quarterback Cameron Newton, Gus Malzahn's first true dual threat in five seasons as a Division I offensive coordinator, will throw for 20-plus touchdowns and rush for at least 10 more.
- 3 Les Miles has the best record for an LSU coach in his first five years, but he will barely save his job by winning nine games.
- 4 Tennessee will be 2-6 by the end of October, the Vols' worst start since 1988—when they lost their first six games before winning five straight at the finish.
- 5 It will take South Carolina coach Steve Spurrier all of one game to bench enigmatic senior quarterback Stephen Garcia in favor of true freshman Connor Shaw. For good.
- 6 Troubled Oregon transfer Jeremiah Masoli won't make the impact Ole Miss needs at the quarterback spot, and he'll create chemistry problems.
- 7 Arkansas will make it back to a New Year's Day bowl by beating South Carolina, UTEP and Mississippi State in November.
- 8 Mississippi State will enter November with a chance to play in an upper-tier bowl—and lose three straight to Alabama, Arkansas and Ole Miss.



South Carolina's Garcia (left) might be out of second chances with Spurrier.

AND 3 MORE FROM ...

→ **Former Georgia coach Jim Donnan:** **Florida's John Brantley will be a big-time quarterback.** "His dad was a good player at Florida, his uncle was a good player at Florida, and when you grow up around football people, you just see those certain guys get it. I really think he's exactly what a rebuilding offense needs. He's not going to make a lot of mistakes. They've got a lot of playmakers, a lot of guys that can help him be successful. He's going to be a guy who can not only run the club but be a real force for the offense."

→ **Former Georgia DE and Cincinnati Bengals LB David Pollack:** **The league will have four 10-win teams.** "I'm going with Alabama, Florida, LSU and Georgia. It would be a disaster if Alabama didn't win 10, and I don't think Florida is going to fall off much without Tim Tebow. The two key teams are LSU and Georgia, and both need smart play from the quarterback to get 10 wins."

→ **Former NFL QB and current CBS analyst Gary Danielson:** **The league's lower-tier teams will get big wins.** "There are seven SEC teams ranked in the various preseason polls. But those other five unranked teams will all beat one of those seven ranked teams. The pack is going to move up to the top this year. It's going to be more about the depth of the conference than the two elites. Alabama has two straight unbeaten regular seasons in the SEC, and it's hard for me to believe they're going to do it a third time. Florida has more stars to replace than any other team. The rest of the league's teams are coached well, are innovative on offense and have experience at quarterback."

RUSS LANDE'S TOP 5 SEC DRAFT PROSPECTS

1. Mark Ingram, RB, Alabama
2. DeMarcus Love, OT, Arkansas
3. A.J. Green, WR, Georgia
4. Julio Jones, WR, Alabama
5. Pernell McPhee, DE, Mississippi State



— Matt Hayes

BOWL PICKS

BCS CHAMPIONSHIP

Alabama vs. Ohio State



SUGAR

Florida vs. Oklahoma



CAPITAL ONE

Arkansas vs. Iowa



CHICK-FIL-A

Auburn vs. Florida State



COTTON

LSU vs. Nebraska



OUTBACK

Georgia vs. Penn State



GATOR

South Carolina vs. Northwestern



MUSIC CITY

Ole Miss vs. Boston College



LIBERTY

Mississippi State vs. Houston



THE OTHERS

CONFERENCE USA

East

UCF	9-3 (7-1)
Southern Miss	8-4 (5-3)
East Carolina	6-6 (5-3)
Marshall	5-7 (3-5)
UAB	4-8 (3-5)
Memphis	1-11 (1-7)

West

Houston	10-2 (8-0)
Tulsa	9-3 (6-2)
SMU	6-6 (5-3)
UTEP	7-5 (4-4)
Rice	2-10 (1-7)
Tulane	0-12 (0-8)

COACH OF THE YEAR

Kevin Sumlin, Houston

PLAYER OF THE YEAR

Case Keenum, QB, Houston

BOWL PICKS

LIBERTY

Houston vs. Mississippi State

NEW ORLEANS

UCF vs. Middle Tennessee State

BEEF 'O' BRADY'S

Southern Miss vs. Connecticut

DALLAS FOOTBALL CLASSIC

Tulsa vs. Texas Tech

HAWAII

UTEP vs. Fresno State

EAGLEBANK

East Carolina vs. South Florida

ARMED FORCES

SMU vs. BYU

MAC

East

Temple	9-3 (7-1)
Bowling Green	7-5 (6-2)
Ohio	6-6 (5-3)
Kent State	5-7 (4-4)
Buffalo	4-8 (3-5)
Akron	4-8 (3-5)
Miami (Ohio)	1-11 (1-7)

West

Northern Illinois	9-3 (7-1)
Central Michigan	7-5 (6-2)
Western Michigan	4-8 (3-5)
Ball State	5-7 (3-5)
Toledo	3-9 (3-5)
Eastern Michigan	1-11 (1-7)

COACH OF THE YEAR

Jerry Kill, Northern Illinois

PLAYER OF THE YEAR

Bernard Pierce, RB, Temple

BOWL PICKS

LITTLE CAESARS PIZZA

Northern Illinois vs. Troy

GMAC

Temple vs. Florida International

PAPAJOHNS.COM

Bowling Green vs. Cincinnati

HUMANITARIAN

Central Michigan vs. Idaho

MOUNTAIN WEST

TCU	12-0 (8-0)
Utah	10-2 (7-1)
Air Force	9-3 (6-2)
BYU	8-4 (5-3)
Colorado State	5-7 (3-5)
Wyoming	4-8 (2-6)
New Mexico	3-9 (2-6)
San Diego State	4-8 (2-6)
UNLV	1-12 (1-7)

COACH OF THE YEAR

Troy Calhoun, Air Force

PLAYER OF THE YEAR

Andy Dalton, QB, TCU

BOWL PICKS

LAS VEGAS

TCU vs. UCLA

POINSETTIA

Utah vs. Navy

INDEPENDENCE

Air Force vs. N.C. State

ARMED FORCES

BYU vs. SMU

SUN BELT

Middle Tennessee State	11-1 (8-0)
Florida International	6-6 (6-2)
Arkansas State	5-7 (5-3)
Troy	6-6 (5-3)
Florida Atlantic	4-8 (4-4)
Louisiana-Lafayette	4-8 (3-5)
Louisiana-Monroe	3-9 (2-6)
North Texas	2-10 (2-6)
Western Kentucky	1-11 (1-7)

COACH OF THE YEAR

Mario Cristobal, Florida International

PLAYER OF THE YEAR

Jerrel Jernigan, WR, Troy

BOWL PICKS

NEW ORLEANS

Middle Tennessee State vs. UCF

GMAC

Florida International vs. Temple

LITTLE CAESARS PIZZA

Troy vs. Northern Illinois

WAC

Boise State	12-0 (8-0)
Nevada	10-3 (7-1)
Louisiana Tech	6-6 (5-3)
Idaho	7-6 (4-4)
Fresno State	6-6 (4-4)
Utah State	5-7 (4-4)
New Mexico State	4-8 (3-5)
Hawaii	3-10 (1-7)
San Jose State	2-11 (0-8)

COACH OF THE YEAR

Chris Petersen, Boise State

PLAYER OF THE YEAR

Kellen Moore, QB, Boise State

BOWL PICKS

ROSE

Boise State vs. Oregon

KRAFT FIGHT HUNGER

Nevada vs. Stanford

NEW MEXICO

Louisiana Tech vs. Louisville

HUMANITARIAN

Idaho vs. Central Michigan

HAWAII

Fresno State vs. UTEP

INDEPENDENTS

Notre Dame	8-4
Navy	7-5
Army	6-6

BOWL PICKS

CHAMPS SPORTS

Notre Dame vs. Virginia Tech

POINSETTIA

Navy vs. Utah

5 people
who will
shape the
season

➔ 1.

Dayne Crist, QB, Notre Dame

Crist wanted to play quarterback for Notre Dame—rather than hometown USC—because he welcomed the pressure of playing for the Irish. Well, the pressure is on: He's following a three-year starter (Jimmy Clausen) and playing for a new coach (Brian Kelly), and he has the weight of every subway alum on his shoulders. Plus, unless Notre Dame gets really good really fast on defense, his margin for error will be slim. "It's incredibly exciting," Crist says. "This is why I am here; I'm not backing away from anything."

2

Ryan Winterswyk, DE, Boise State

What happens in nonconference showdowns against Virginia Tech and Oregon State, which have two of the top five running backs (Ryan Williams and Jacquizz Rodgers) in the nation, will go a long way in determining Boise State's hopes of playing for a national title. And Winterswyk is the best run stuffer—and pass rusher—on the Broncos' defense. "We know what we're up against," he says. "We have to stop those high-powered running games. We're not flying under the radar anymore. We're going to get everyone's best shot—and everyone is expecting big things from us."

[8] PREDICTIONS

FROM MATT HAYES

3

Braylon Broughton, DE, TCU

In the spirit of TCU coach Gary Patterson's philosophy that every player is a clean slate, we introduce Broughton. He didn't start playing football until his junior year of high school, and he signed with Arizona but wasn't allowed to enroll for academic reasons. Then he took a year off and stocked shelves at Wal-Mart. He has gained 60 pounds since arriving on campus in 2007 and now, as a junior, is a key member of a top 10 team. "He's a man, a physical specimen," Patterson says. "He knows it's his time; he's ready to have that breakout season."

4

Brian Stewart, defensive coordinator, Houston

Stewart was hired in January and rolled out his 3-4 defense in spring practices, and all it took was the Red-White scrimmage to show what he could do for the team that hadn't been able to stop anyone. "You throw some punches, you take some punches—but you can't get knocked out," says Stewart, the Dallas Cowboys' coordinator in 2007 and '08. How about this for a punch: The new defense had 11 sacks and four turnovers and kept one of the nation's most dangerous offenses from scoring until the eighth drive of the spring game. It's not so much a change of personnel as it is a change in scheme and mentality for a unit that could do enough to get Houston to its first BCS bowl. "If you play with confidence," Stewart says, "you naturally play better."

5

McKay Jacobson, WR, BYU

The most dynamic player in the Mountain West missed four games last season after suffering a hamstring injury in Week 4, and he never completely healed. Yet Jacobson averaged 24.2 yards per catch. "He's really fast, has a good change of direction and catches the ball," says Oklahoma coach Bob Stoops, whose team lost to BYU last September. "He does it all—a nice option to have outside." Jake Heaps is probably thinking the same thing. The heralded freshman could win the starting quarterback job and face this to start the season: Washington, at Air Force and at Florida State. "We're hungry to go out and make plays for our quarterback," Jacobson says. "We like playing in those big games against the big schools."

1 Central Michigan took another chance and found another jewel of a coach: Dan Enos will follow another career assistant, Butch Jones, and lower-division star Brian Kelly and keep the Chips among the league's elite.

2 On the first day of the season, Middle Tennessee State and dual-threat quarterback Dwight Dasher (36 total touchdowns in 2009) will upset Minnesota.

3 Boise State junior quarterback Kellen Moore will lead the Broncos to a 13-0 record—making him 39-1 as a starter—and go to New York as a Heisman Trophy finalist.

4 Chris Ault, a College Football Hall of Famer and the face of Nevada football, will retire at the end of the season after returning the Wolf Pack to the WAC elite in his second stint as coach.

5 Somewhere out there is a BCS league university president who likes what Paul Johnson has done at Georgia

Tech with his funky option offense and will hire Navy coach Ken Niumatalolo—a Johnson disciple.

6 Louisiana Tech quarterback Ross Jenkins (17 passing TDs and five interceptions last year) will flourish in the last month of the season after eight weeks in new coach Sonny Dykes' quarterback-friendly offense.

7 Army will go 0-3 against its three biggest rivals (Navy, Notre Dame, Air Force) and miss out on a bowl despite being eligible at 6-6.

8 Welcome to big-boy football, Bobby Hauck. After seven seasons (and 80 wins) at Division I-AA Montana, Hauck's first season at UNLV will end with one victory.

AND 3 MORE FROM ...

→ **Former TCU and NFL RB Kenneth Davis: TCU LB Tank Carder will be a consensus All-American.**

"I know that's a heavy load to put on him. But he's that good. He's an intelligent player. He's a quick player. He's going to be a very fun guy to watch. I think across the board on the defense TCU is going to be incredible."

→ **Former Notre Dame and Denver Broncos OL George Goeddeke: New Irish coach Brian Kelly will get instant results.**

"Notre Dame always has the bodies to do whatever they need to do to win a national championship if they're properly motivated and they get the right chemistry going

and they're hungry. That's the maestro's obligation. That's what Ara Parseghian did for us guys. We went from 2-7 to 9-1 in one year. ... I think Kelly has a lot of those same qualities that Ara had. Good public speaker, good motivator. He's going in with some urgency."

→ **Former Boise Junior College (now Boise State) LB and NFL Hall of Famer Dave Wilcox: Broncos QB Kellen Moore will be a Heisman finalist.** "I would think he'll at least be in the conversation somewhere if he has stats like he did last year. If you saw (his face), you'd think he's just getting out of junior high. But he just knows how to play."

RUSS LANDE'S TOP 5 DRAFT PROSPECTS OUTSIDE THE BCS

1. Kyle Rudolph, TE, Notre Dame
2. Pat Devlin, QB, Delaware
3. Jerrel Jernigan, WR, Troy
4. Dontay Moch, DE, Nevada
5. Nathan Enderle, QB, Idaho

—Matt Crossman, Matt Hayes

SN's best of the rest

OFFENSE

QB **Kellen Moore**, Jr., Boise State
RB **Donald Buckram**, Sr., UTEP
RB **Vai Taua**, Sr., Nevada
OL **Jake Kirkpatrick**, Sr., TCU
OL **Matt Reynolds**, Jr., BYU
OL **Caleb Schlauderaff**, Sr., Utah
OL **Marcus Cannon**, Sr., TCU
OL **Rod Huntley**, Sr., UTEP
WR **Michael Floyd**, Jr., Notre Dame
WR **James Cleveland**, Sr., Houston
TE **Kyle Rudolph**, Jr., Notre Dame

DEFENSE

DL **Bruce Miller**, Sr., UCF
DL **Ryan Winterswyk**, Sr., Boise State
DL **Adrian Robinson**, Jr., Temple
DL **Ethan Johnson**, Jr., Notre Dame
LB **Nick Bellore**, Sr., Central Michigan
LB **Tank Carder**, Jr., TCU
LB **Ben Jacobs**, Sr., Fresno State
DB **Emanuel Davis**, Jr., East Carolina
DB **Davon House**, Sr., New Mexico State
DB **Jeron Johnson**, Sr., Boise State
DB **Davonte Shannon**, Sr., Buffalo

SPECIALISTS

K **Matt Weller**, Soph., Ohio
P **Michael Such**, Sr., Tulsa



WELCOME TO Fabulous LAS VEGAS NEVADA

THE STATS

Days on the road: 14

Miles driven: 1,479

Miles flown: 9,662

Events covered: 7

- LeBron James Skills Academy, Akron, Ohio
- King City Classic, Cleveland
- Nike EYBL Peach Jam, North Augusta, S.C.
- Adidas Super 64, Las Vegas
- Fab 48, Las Vegas
- AAU Super Showcase, Orlando
- AAU junior boys national championships, Orlando



Highly coveted guard Nick Johnson lit up opponents wherever he played this summer, but he made himself right at home in Las Vegas.

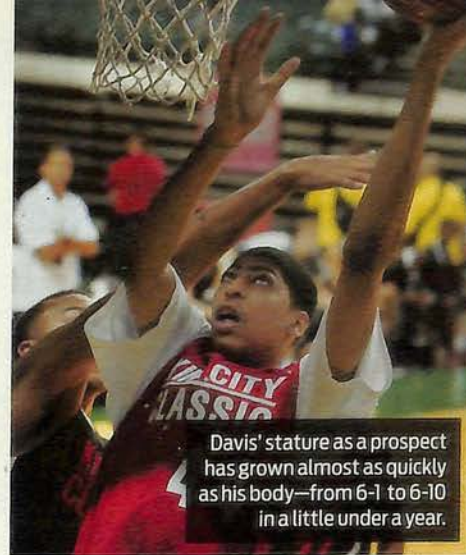
LAS

34 things we learned on the summer recruiting circuit

SPORTING NEWS HIT THE ROAD DURING THE JULY RECRUITING PERIOD TO GET AN EARLY LOOK AT COLLEGE BASKETBALL'S CLASS OF 2011—AND A FEW PRODIGIES

By Mike DeCourcy

Photos by Bob Leverone / SN



Davis' stature as a prospect has grown almost as quickly as his body—from 6-1 to 6-10 in a little under a year.

1 IT'S HOTTER THAN KENTUCKY OUT THERE

In Las Vegas, the temperature is 112 degrees, hot enough to turn a rental car into a saucepan. In Orlando, it is 92 degrees with 70 percent humidity, the air so thick it could be spread onto an English muffin.

College basketball coaches complain about the heat as they spend July in search of the next generation of prospects. They complain, as well, about the search for the next generation of prospects. They complain that they're gone too long, that they're doing as much baby-sitting as evaluating, that they spend too much time in traffic, that the bleachers in all these high school gyms are too darn hard.

At their core, however, coaches understand summer recruiting is about discovery.

"What better way to make a living than traveling around watching guys play?" USC coach Kevin O'Neill says as he walks across a scorching sidewalk outside Bishop Gorman High near Las Vegas.

"You can see who wants to play. You can see the passion," Texas coach Rick Barnes says from the bleachers at Vegas' Rancho High.

Summer recruiting is about prospects such as Anthony Davis of Chicago. A little more than a year ago, he was a 6-1 guard hardly anyone outside his family noticed. A growth spurt now places him closer to 6-10, and he has learned to use his length to become a defensive force while retaining his guard skills.

In the spring, he was offered a scholarship by Cleveland State and nearly committed because he'd received so little interest from high-major schools. Not long afterward, he got a call from Mike Krzyzewski that still thrills him, even though he isn't considering Duke and instead will choose among DePaul, Kentucky, Ohio State and Syracuse.

"I never thought I'd be here," Davis says. "I've just got to keep humble and keep working."

Summer recruiting can be a grind for the players as well as the coaches. The period runs for 20 days in July, with a five-day break midmonth. Some prospects are active nearly throughout. Most coaches rarely feel comfortable leaving the road.

"The average fan doesn't realize how much time goes into this," Fairfield coach Ed Cooley says while sitting in the Milk House at Disney's Wide World of Sports in Orlando. "But if you can't enjoy this, how are you going to build your program?"

"Everybody (else) pays to come to Disney. They pay us to be here."

DAVIS: GUS CHAN / LANDOV; THE CLEVELAND PLAIN DEALER

2 NICK JOHNSON CAN PLAY ON THE ROAD

Nick Johnson is traveling the recruiting trail from Akron to Cleveland to South Carolina to Las Vegas to Los Angeles. But he's used to basketball taking him away from home.

A year ago, he decided to leave his family and high school friends behind in Phoenix and move to the Las Vegas area to play for Findlay Prep, a basketball program based at the Henderson International School. Johnson calls his team "the Oak Hill of the West Coast."

"He's starting to evolve into his own as a senior," says Findlay coach Mike Peck. "I just think there's a level of urgency, a sense of maturity. Confidence is probably a big part of it. Once he's gone through our system and believes in it and goes back to the summer circuit, it's different."

Johnson is a 6-2 guard being recruited by Arizona, Arizona State and nearly a dozen other schools.

"I've always said if it's the right decision, the right spot, it doesn't matter where it is," he says. "Obviously, I'd like to play in front of my family, but if it's the right choice they can find a way to get there."

3 ZACH PRICE WILL SACRIFICE HIS BODY

The King City Classic in Cleveland is so disposable that 12 hours after the event, its namesake, LeBron James, will abdicate his reign over this particular city.

The players are placed on teams for what amount to glorified pickup games. So in this context, what on God's green Earth is Zach Price thinking?

The opposing team's 6-5, 220-pound Dezmine Wells motors down the lane, and Price steps in to draw a charge? Price goes down like a quarterback recently introduced to Dwight Freeney.

And here's the thing: Price, a 6-11 center from Ohio, doesn't need to impress any of the coaches watching to get the scholarship he wants. He accepted Louisville's offer last September.

Price says he stepped in to draw the charge because, "I'm going to do anything it takes in order for my team to win."

Even if it's kind of nuts, apparently. "I've taken a few harder ones," Price says. "It's always about bouncing back up."

4 NICK FAUST HAS POWERFUL FRIENDS

Nick Faust is a promising wing from Baltimore, and he's being recruited by Maryland, Villanova and Tennessee, among others. A terrific shooter and deceptive athlete, Faust is one of the fastest-rising players in the class, which he attributes to working in the gym with "my cousin Will."

And who's Will?

It's Will Barton, a five-star wing from Baltimore who reportedly is appealing the NCAA ruling that he's academically ineligible at Memphis this season.

So, yeah, it seems he could teach Faust a few moves.

5 THE "NEXT JOHN WALL" KNOWS JOHN WALL

It's 9 a.m., and Cleveland State's Wolstein Center is mostly empty, as it will remain for the two-day entirety of the King City Classic. Apparently, not many people are willing to circumnavigate the ocean of seagull droppings on the sidewalks out front, but Mike Krzyzewski, Roy Williams, Tom Izzo and Gary Williams are gathered in the stands, watching intently.

What about this game would draw so many coaches with championship rings?

"The point guard who scores on a twisting drive looks pretty impressive. And who is he? Rodney Purvis, 6-4, 187 pounds, class of 2-0-1-3.

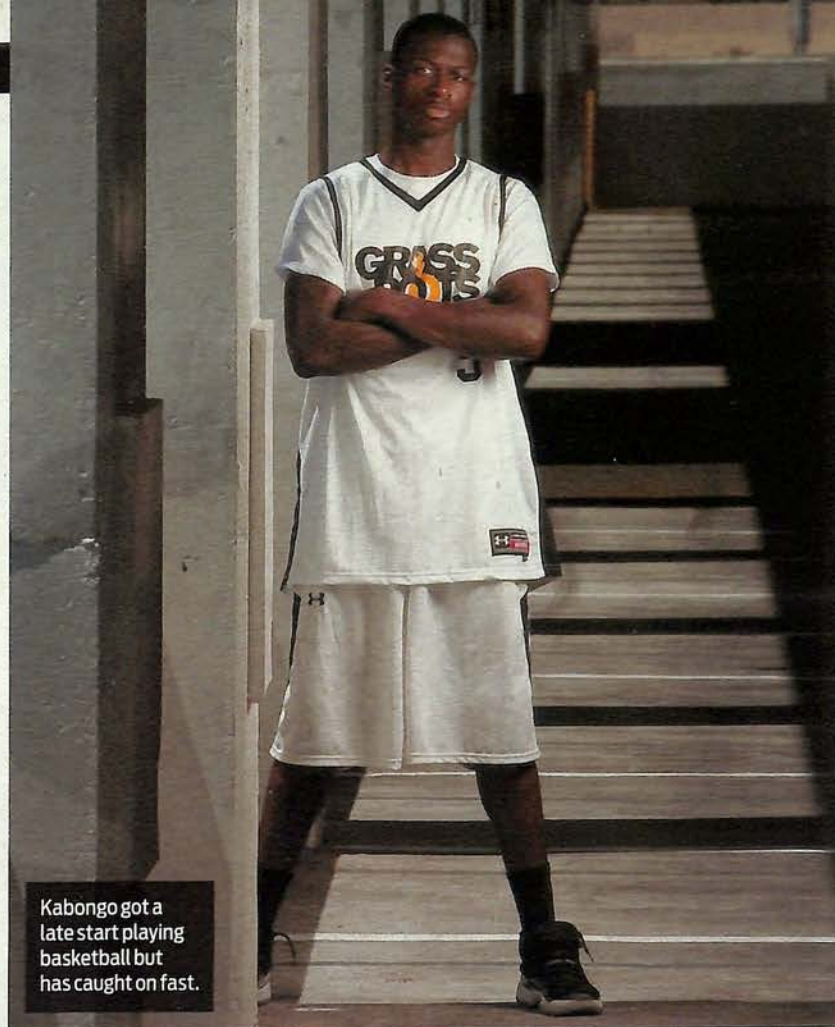
That means he's just heading into his sophomore season. Which explains a lot.

"Of course you see them walking in," Purvis says. "The lights are shining right on them: *He's Coach K*. But I don't really pay too much attention to it. I'm just out there trying to play, trying to do well so I can get noticed by them."

People already are starting to compare Purvis to Washington Wizards guard John Wall, at least in part because the two are friends and both come from Raleigh.

"He's the No. 1 draft pick, and I'm a rising sophomore. There's really no comparison at all," Purvis says, which only makes him more appealing as a prospect.

Purvis estimates he has played more than 100 one-on-one games against Wall, "and I lost every single time. He's a fierce competitor. If you've got game point, he's not going to let you score."



Kabongo got a late start playing basketball but has caught on fast.

6 CANADA EXPORTS MORE THAN MOLSON AND HOCKEY PLAYERS

Myck Kabongo—pronounced "Mike"—was born in Zaire, which is now the Democratic Republic of the Congo. He grew up in Toronto, which recently has produced some impressive basketball prospects, including Kabongo's future Texas teammates Tristan Thompson and Cory Joseph. But Kabongo, a 6-2 point guard, played basketball last season at St. Benedict's in New Jersey and this year will move to Nevada to play at Findlay Prep.

"The best players always come from America," Kabongo says. "There's no doubt in my mind, you guys always produce the best: Kobe, LeBron. Growing up in Canada, the talent is not as competitive. I knew if I wanted to be good I had to come up here to play the best and see where I ranked."

The answer: really high, among the top dozen prospects in the class according to both Scout.com and Rivals.com.

Kabongo preferred soccer and didn't fall in love with this game until he was 11 or 12, when he played a one-on-one game with a friend named Maled.

And Maled destroyed him. "I'll never forget," Kabongo says. "I hate losing. So after that day I just started working on my game every day. I never took a day off."

And did Maled become a great player?

"No," Kabongo says. "But he has that story."

7 COACH K SITS WHERE HE WANTS

The well-organized Peach Jam tournament, played at the four-court Riverview Park Activities Center in North Augusta, S.C., generally has the teams in its pool play segment stay on the same court. This year, that leads to the Each 1 Teach 1 squad featuring top five guard Austin Rivers (son of Celtics coach Doc Rivers) of Winter Park, Fla., appearing on Court 2 three times in 24 hours.

Though coaches generally shuffle among courts to scout various prospects and grab whatever chair is open, Mike Krzyzewski watches each Rivers game from the exact same courtside seat. It's as if he never moves.

Duke assistant Chris Collins laughs when asked if his principal duty at the Peach Jam has been to guard that seat for Coach K.

8

STEVE LAVIN IS STILL FITTING IN AT ST. JOHN'S

On the final full night of competition at the Peach Jam, new St. John's coach Steve Lavin strolls through the automatic double doors wearing a teal Lacoste polo shirt. It's not quite blue enough to qualify as UCLA blue, but it's clearly not the shade of red St. John's Red Storm nickname implies.

"I've been on the road so long I ran out of St. John's gear," he explains. "I haven't been in one place long enough to send out the laundry and get it back. I bought two of these in the Atlanta airport."

9-12

SOME SIGHTS ON THE TRAIL ARE GOOD ONES ...

→ Cynthia Richardson, mother of top prospect Michael Gilchrist, wears the small forward's U-17 World Championship gold medal throughout the Peach Jam. "I'm so proud," she says, beaming. "It was a tremendous honor."

→ Point guard Marquis Teague of Indianapolis puts on the warmup jacket he got in a trade with a player from the Chinese U-17 team at the World Championship. "We got to see a lot of things, meet a lot of new people, hear a lot of different languages," Teague says. "It was great."

→ Dajuan Coleman, an overpowering 6-9 center from Dewitt, N.Y., in the class of 2012, misses his first free throw and then steps into the lane to slap hands with his teammates, as players do almost as a custom now. Except no one standing adjacent to the lane steps forward to greet him. So Coleman executes a sort of "air-five" with each hand and then goes back to the line for his second attempt.

→ The shot clock is in use at all Peach Jam games. When Rashard Lewis was playing for Houston Hoops at a tournament in 1997, his coach decided to use a zone defense. The opposing coach instructed his players to stall until Lewis' team came out of its zone. This went on for more than a quarter and a half. The shot clock kills that kind of nonsense.

13

... AND SOME ARE NOT

Near the end of a dangerously contentious game between Team Philly and Chicago-based Mac Irvin Fire at the Fab 48 in Vegas, elite Fire guard Wayne Blackshear is pulled to the ground on a breakaway—and only

quick work from officials and a fair amount of restraint from Blackshear prevents a brawl.

This is the last of several over-the-line fouls Philly commits as the Fire pull away during the second half. But all this is merely the preamble.

Seconds before the final buzzer, Team Philly guard Ben Mingledough spits a loogie on the floor near the baseline—and leaves it there as the game ends.

14

ROY WILLIAMS WILL TAKE THE WHEEL TO FIND PLAYERS

Serving as head coach of one of the nation's most prominent programs means North Carolina's Roy Williams frequently has access to private planes for recruiting trips. By the third day of the evaluation period, he's wishing he could jet set more often.

After answering a 4:30 a.m. wakeup call, he leaves his hotel room and is greeted by assistant coach Steve Robinson with these words: "We've got some problems."

The 5:55 a.m. flight from Indianapolis to Cleveland has been canceled, so that means waiting for a later flight and missing games at the King City Classic—or driving.

Robinson handles the first few hours while the head coach sleeps, and Williams takes over for the final portion. They miss only the first 10 minutes of the 9 a.m. opener. Williams says the worst part of the trip is the continuous sports talk chatter about LeBron James' destination.



Wiltjer was one of the best big men on the summer circuit—and he wasn't afraid to get a few floor burns.

15

COACHES LOATHE REFS IN THE SUMMER, TOO

Conferences often use these camps and tournaments to evaluate and train new officials, and that means having veteran refs around to talk to officiating prospects about their techniques and execution.

That can be distracting to coaches still holding grudges. Spotting official Bryan Kersey, one head coach says it's "ruining his day" to be reminded of how one of Kersey's calls helped cost his team a big game last season.

16-18

COACHES ARE FUNNIER IN JULY

→ Kentucky coach John Calipari is watching Wildcats point guard commit Marquis Teague with the Spiece Indy Heat when the New Jersey Playaz switch to a 1-3-1 zone and completely dismantle the Spiece team.

"I'm not going to say anything about struggling against a 1-3-1," Calipari says.

→ Every coach wears free sneakers issued by his program's shoe sponsors, but the matching Adidas kicks worn by Kansas coach Bill Self and assistant Kurtis Townsend are a cut above. They have "KU" emblazoned at the tip of the tongue. "This is a big-time deal we've got going," Self says with a smirk. "Not everybody can get this done."

→ When Portland power forward Kyle Wiltjer chases a loose ball into the stands holding a couple dozen college coaches, Washington's Lorenzo Romar quickly ducks into the clear. "You tell your players to hang in there," Maryland coach Gary Williams says, "and you get the heck out of the way."

19

WALKING IS NOT ALWAYS A VIOLATION

Sitting courtside at the Peach Jam, Butler coach Brad Stevens talks about getting an e-mail that is both wonderful and disheartening at once. It contains a video of his baby daughter Kinsley's first steps.

"That is not a good e-mail to get," he says.

And yet it is.

"I've watched it 50 times," Stevens says. "A game gets bad, and I go to that."

20

THE NCAA HAS COLLEGE COACHES ON GUARD

One way the NCAA polices its July restrictions against college coaches mingling with

prospects, their family members or their summer coaches is to designate separate gym entrances for each.

When a Peach Jam showdown between Each 1 Teach 1 (Austin Rivers) and Boo Williams AAU (James McAdoo) draws a standing room-only crowd, a few little boys begin sneaking through the coaches' door to search for a place to watch.

Spotting this, a woman from the NCAA chases out the kids—then warns coaches standing at the door not to let noncoaches through. The nearest coach: Kansas assistant Joe Dooley.

Never one to miss an opportunity for mirth, Rick Barnes begins suggesting the NCAA put Kansas on probation for Dooley's failures as a sentry. Kansas State coach Frank Martin, seated next to Barnes, agrees—and proposes scholarship cuts, as well.

21-24

THERE ARE THINGS SOME COACHES WOULD PREFER YOU DIDN'T KNOW

→ The NCAA regulates contact between college coaches and prospects, parents and summer coaches in the gyms where tournaments are being contested, but there still are a lot of private conversations at the players' hotels. At least a dozen college coaches make that observation.

→ Near the end of a big tournament, college coaches root for their recruits' teams to lose. If a prospect's team is eliminated, it might mean an extra day at home for the college coach or the chance to move on to another tournament and scout more players.

→ NCAA rules permit coaches to travel the day before tournaments so they may be in place for the first tipoff. Given that games can begin at 8 a.m., there is legitimacy to that. But the best reason coaches head to Las Vegas the day before the second segment of the evaluation period opens? The chance to spend a night at the blackjack tables without worrying whether the Dream Vision have a 9:45 p.m. game in the Super 64.

→ Coaches keep track of other coaches in the gym as they watch their top prospects. At the AAU Super Showcase in Orlando, one Eastern head coach scoffs when the assistant of a major national power shows up after halftime to watch the center they're both recruiting, then spends most of the second half on his cell phone.

25

NOT EVERYBODY WANTS A SHOW

You can learn a lot about a player watching him warm up for a game—and watching coaches watch him.

"Watch my man here," a West Coast coach says as 5-9 point guard Kiwi Gardner of the Oakland Soldiers gets the ball in a layup line at the Peach Jam. "I guarantee you he's going to do some kind of messed-up crap."

On cue, Gardner throws the ball skyward on an arc designed to produce a bounce off the floor that Gardner can gather and dunk in one motion. A typical dunk contest maneuver. Except this is not a dunk contest. Gardner misses. Undaunted, he tries twice more before the game begins.

"We've got 5-9 point guards out there trying to throw 30-foot lobbs and dunk them," the coach says, "and all we coaches wonder why they can't make jump stops in the lane."

26

QUINN COOK IS IN CHARGE

Marquis Teague is Scout.com's top-ranked point guard in the 2011 class, the one John Calipari landed as the successor to Derrick Rose, Tyreke Evans and John Wall. But it was Quinn Cook who started at that position for the U.S. junior national team in the U-17 World Championship.

He won the job for a simple reason: "I'm a leader."

That's why more than a dozen schools, including Arizona, Georgetown and possibly Duke, want him to be their next point guard.

His style is to lift his teammates and be hardest on himself.

"I never hammer them," Cook says. "If I do, it'll be in a nice way."

"With the USA (team), Johnny O'Bryant—he's a heck of a player, but sometimes he'll get lazy. So I'd pull him aside: 'I need you. I need you on this play.' And he'd give me six rebounds, four points, everything. I just try to do little things like that."

27

THERE ARE QUALIFIED SUMMER COACHES

The stereotype of the summer basketball coach is he's the fellow who rolls out the balls and doesn't know a pick-and-roll from a pecan roll. This can be an unfair description, and in some cases it's outrageously incorrect.

John Carroll of the New England



Playaz has been the head coach of the Boston Celtics and Duquesne Dukes.

Dana Dingle of the Long Island Lightning started alongside Marcus Camby on UMass' 1996 Final Four squad.

And yep, that's 11-year NBA veteran guard Rafer Alston looking stylish in his all-white outfit and coaching his socks off with the New York Panthers.

Alston's high-energy sideline act is as entertaining—cajoling his players, working the refs—as anything that happens on the floor. He says he wants to coach at a higher level "eventually."

"I thought I'd start with them. I've been doing it the last five years," Alston says. "It gives you a little preparation, rather than just jumping into the fire. You get to learn how to manage the game, how to manage kids. Plus I love the kids."

28

YOUR NATIONAL TEAM COACHES ARE WORKING OT

Mike Krzyzewski and Villanova coach Jay Wright are burning it at both ends in Las Vegas, and not because they're hanging with LeBron at Tao. The coaches are working their scouting trips to various high school tournaments into

breaks from their duties with USA Basketball—Krzyzewski as senior national team coach and Wright with the Select Team, a group of collegians who practice against the national team.

On the first day of the Adidas Super 64 tournament, they're occupied with USA Basketball practice and planning from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m., then are eager to get to Rancho High to watch the New England Playaz—the team featuring burgeoning 2012 prospect Alex Murphy.

Wright quickly changes clothes in his hotel room, hustles down to the curb to get into his rental car—and runs into Krzyzewski.

"We just laughed and said, 'We might as well go together,'" Wright says.

"I really think USA Basketball has reached the point where in recruiting, kids really respect it. It interferes, but I don't think it hurts us."

When they arrive at the gym, by the way, Wright and Krzyzewski do not sit together in the stands.

29

MATT DOHERTY LOST HIS RAZOR

Sure, such extraordinary players as Shabazz Muhammad of Las Vegas cause a stir on the summer circuit,

but that's nothing compared with the reaction when SMU coach Matt Doherty walks by rocking a full beard.

"Are you kidding me?" says one West Coast head coach. "He looks like Donald Sutherland."

Doherty is pleased to discover he's being watched but says, "I hope they're noticing my team next year."

TOP 5

SHOOTERS

1. SG MYLES DAVIS

6-2, St. Peter's (Jersey City, N.J.)
Davis says when he was a kid, "Even my punishments were working on my form. It was crazy, but it definitely paid off."

2. SF AUSTIN ETHERINGTON

6-6, Hamilton Heights (Arcadia, Ind.)

3. SG AUSTIN RIVERS

6-4, Winter Park (Fla.)

4. SG P.J. HAIRSTON

6-6, Hargrave Military Academy (Chatham, Va.)

5. SG NICK JOHNSON

6-3, Findlay Prep (Henderson, Nev.)

➔ Former Maryland forward Keith Booth: Terps assistant
 ➔ Former Seton Hall guard Shaheen Holloway: Pirates assistant
 ➔ Former Syracuse guard Adrian Autry: Virginia Tech assistant
 ➔ Former Duke guard Bobby Hurley: Wagner assistant
 Hard to leave off: Former Pitt guard Brandin Knight (Pitt); former Connecticut guard Kevin Ollie (Connecticut); former Kentucky forward Mark Pope (Wake Forest); former Pitt forward Larry Harris (N.C. State); former Louisville swingman Kenny Payne (Kentucky); and former Florida guard Brett Nelson (Arkansas).

31 **KARL COCHRAN WILL DO ANYTHING TO WIN**

Don't ever let it be said no one cares about these games. Slick guard Karl Cochran is willing to sacrifice his blood, sweat—and nearly his eyeteeth—to advance the cause of the World-Wide Renegades.

In a Feb 48 playoff game against the New Jersey-based Playaz, some inadvertent contact injures Cochran and forces him to leave the floor. Turns out his left canine tooth has been driven through his upper lip.

Just like any good hockey player would, Cochran returns to the game at the first opportunity, then leads Georgia's Renegades on a tear that results in an 18-point lead.

As the second half continues, though, the refs are compelled to force him out of the game. "He just can't keep bleeding out here," one ref says.

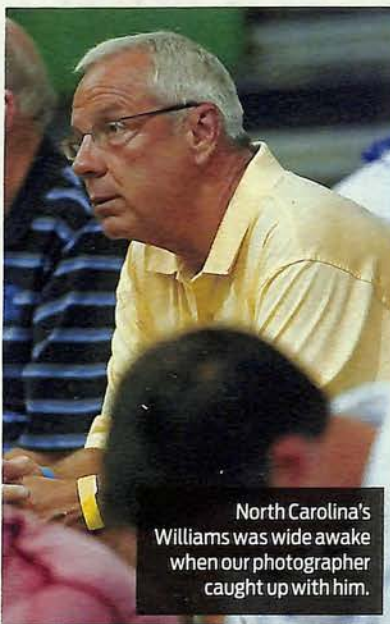
With Cochran on the bench for much of the second half, his team is eliminated.

32 **SLEEP IS NOT AN OPTION**

Flight 1810 is scheduled to depart Las Vegas for Orlando at 10 p.m. UCLA coach Ben Howland is scheduled to be on that redeye flight, whereupon he will land, watch a prospect the Bruins are recruiting play one—maybe two—games in the AAU Super Showcase, then board an early evening flight for Phoenix and another tournament.

At 8:30, Howland says he's not flying. The player he was going to scout won't play Monday; his team has been eliminated. It's hard to view this as anything but a reprieve.

But Roy Williams, Xavier's Chris Mack, LaSalle's John Giannini and perhaps 10 Division I assistants make the trip, and Williams finds just enough time for a 90-minute nap.



North Carolina's Williams was wide awake when our photographer caught up with him.

33 **THE CAPELS ARE BACK TOGETHER**

At several stops on the circuit, it's clear that seeing Oklahoma coach Jeff Capel chatting with new Appalachian State coach Jason Capel is all but inevitable. The brothers appear nearly inseparable.

Given that Jeff went to Duke in 1993 and Jason to North Carolina in 1998 and both were pursuing playing and coaching careers after that, it has been more than a decade since they've had the chance to spend this much time together.

"Since high school, right?" Jeff says.

"It has been nice," Jason says.

34 **THE DESIRE TO BE SEEN CAN MAKE QUITE A SCENE**

It is just past noon on Court 10 at the Jostens Center inside the Wide World of Sports Complex on opening day of the AAU junior boys national championship. Tennessee coach Bruce Pearl and Georgia Tech coach Paul Hewitt are seated along one baseline; at the opposite end are Mississippi State's Rick Stansbury, LSU's Trent Johnson and Memphis' Josh Pastner.

Big Johnny O'Bryant is on the court doing layup drills with his teammates, but there is no game—it has been postponed.

And not one of the coaches is departing.

This is a high-stakes game of chicken. No coach wants to be the first to walk away from a 6-8, 236-pounder ranked as Scout.com's No. 6 power forward in the 2011 class.

"If I was in their shoes," O'Bryant says, "I'd probably want to go see some action."

SN

30 **THERE ARE MORE PLAYERS IN THE STANDS THAN ON THE COURT**

Those who can, do. Those who can't, teach. Those who used to be able to—but can't any longer—become Division I assistants.

The all-star team of college assistants spotted on the recruiting trail:

➔ Former Kansas forward Danny Manning: Jayhawks assistant

BIG MEN

1. PF **ANTHONY DAVIS**

6-10, Perspectives Charter (Chicago)
 There hasn't been a player with such defensive potential since Greg Oden. Davis needs to add strength but has a remarkable mind for the game.

2. PF **JAMES MCADOO**

6-8, Norfolk Christian (Norfolk, Va.)

3. PF **KYLE WILTJER**

6-9, Jesuit (Portland)

4. C **MIKAEL HOPKINS**

6-8, DeMatha Catholic (Hyattsville, Md.)

5. C **ANGELO CHOL**

6-9, Hoover (San Diego)

PLAYMAKERS

1. PG **MARQUIS TEAGUE**

6-3, Pike (Indianapolis)
 It's hard not to be torn about Teague. He has so much maturing to do, but he may be the best passing point guard since Jason Kidd.

2. PG **QUINN COOK**

6-0, Oak Hill Academy (Mouth of Wilson, Va.)

3. PG **MYCK KABONGO**

6-2, Findlay Prep (Henderson, Nev.)

4. PG **JAMAL BRANCH**

6-1, Atascocita (Humble, Texas)

5. PG **JAHIL CARSON**

5-11, Mesa (Ariz.)



PROSPECTS

1. SF **ADONIS THOMAS**

6-5, Melrose (Memphis)
 More coaches are buying into the notion that Thomas' extreme athleticism and exceptional character are the foundation of a star. He just needs a reliable jumper.

2. PF **ANTHONY DAVIS**

6-10, Perspectives Charter (Chicago)

3. SG **AUSTIN RIVERS**

6-4, SG, Winter Park (Fla.)

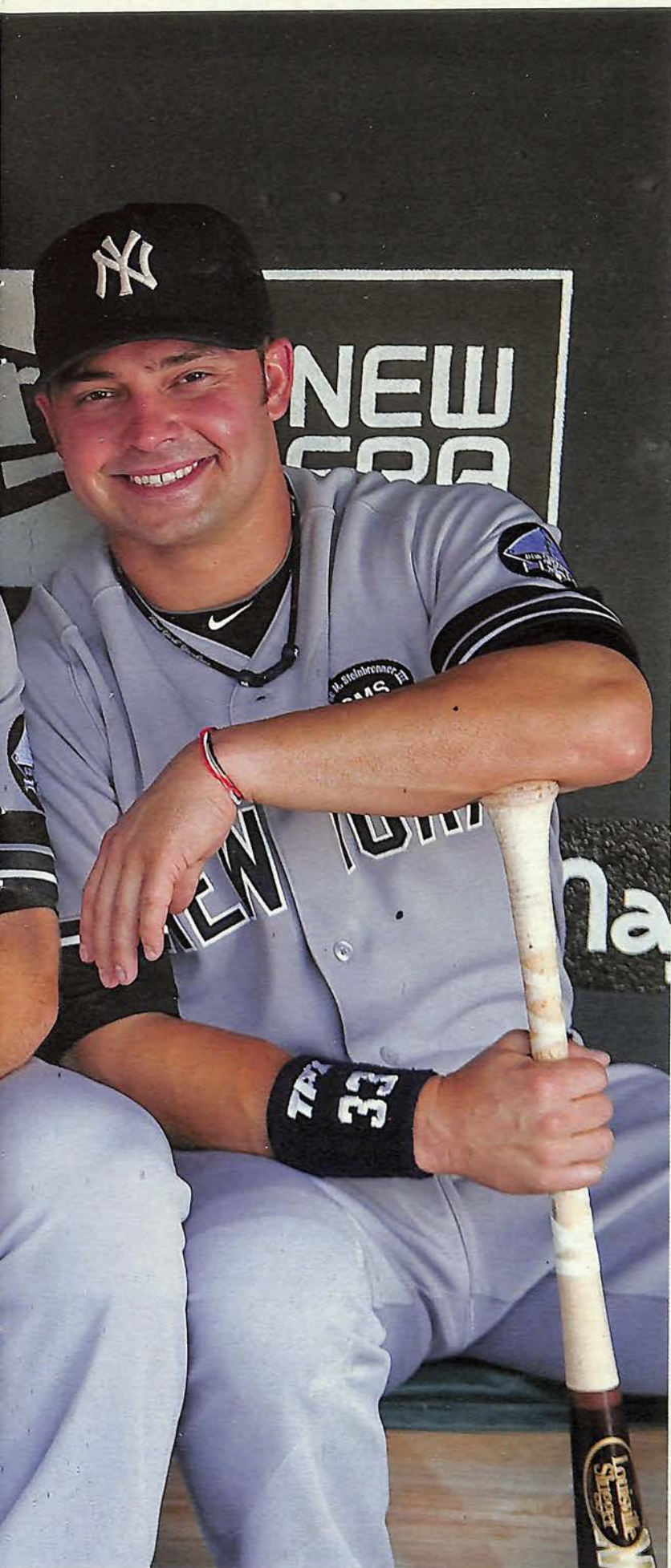
4. PF **QUINCY MILLER**

6-9, Westchester Academy (High Point, N.C.)

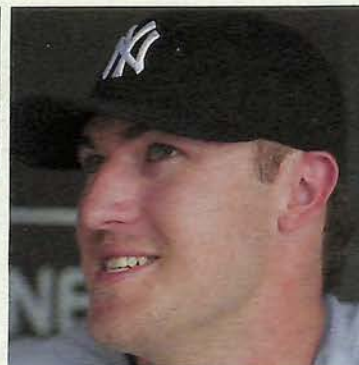
5. SF **MICHAEL GILCHRIST**

6-6, St. Patrick (Elizabeth, N.J.)





‘It’s baseball heaven’



Sporting News Conversation:

Robinson Cano, Phil Hughes, Nick Swisher

The Yankees’ newest generation of stars appreciates the chance to bring a blend of talent and mirth to a clubhouse filled with legends

Photos by Jason Miller for SN

Some professional athletes can hardly mask their disdain for the necessary evils that are interviews and photo shoots. Many favor a polite but bland approach, while others make sure to emit more of a too-cool-to-care vibe. Really, who can blame any of them?

So when three New York ballplayers come hopping into a dugout four hours before a game and fill the next 30 minutes with back-slaps, rabbit ears and unrestrained laughter, well, one can only be happy to be in their company.

It’s largely because of young stars such as Robinson Cano, Nick Swisher and Phil Hughes that the Yankees are not just the team to beat in the major leagues but a bastion of good times and goodwill amidst a storm of expectations and pressure.

Cano, 27, is leading major league second basemen in batting average (.332) and RBIs (72) and has been nearly flawless in the field, with only two errors. Swisher, a 29-year-old right fielder and first-time All-Star, is far ahead of his career bests in both batting average and slugging percentage. Also a first-time All-Star, the 24-year-old Hughes—who was in the Yankees’ bullpen a season ago—has entrenched himself in the rotation with 13 wins.

None of the three is as celebrated in New York or throughout baseball as Derek Jeter, Alex Rodriguez, Mariano Rivera, Jorge Posada, Mark Teixeira or CC Sabathia. But Cano, Swisher and Hughes are carrying more than their shares of the water—and are, quite infectiously, celebrating the good times.

They spoke with *Sporting News’* Steve Greenberg.

Robinson Cano, Phil Hughes, Nick Swisher

SN: What seems more fun, being a midsize fish in the New York pond or being a big fish in a smaller-market pond?

SWISHER: I think we're cool where we are.

CANO: We love it here.

SWISHER: Yeah, I mean, it's baseball heaven, man. We've all said that before. When you look at the situation, it doesn't matter, man. You know, we're all on the same team. We're all fighting the same battle. And I'm telling you, man, there's no better place to play.

CANO: You're with the best, so why go somewhere else?

HUGHES: It's like I said last year, just being in the bullpen and being on a team that wins, you can't ask for anything more than that. You want to be a superstar on a team that doesn't win a championship?

SWISHER: That's it, man. It's all about the W's.

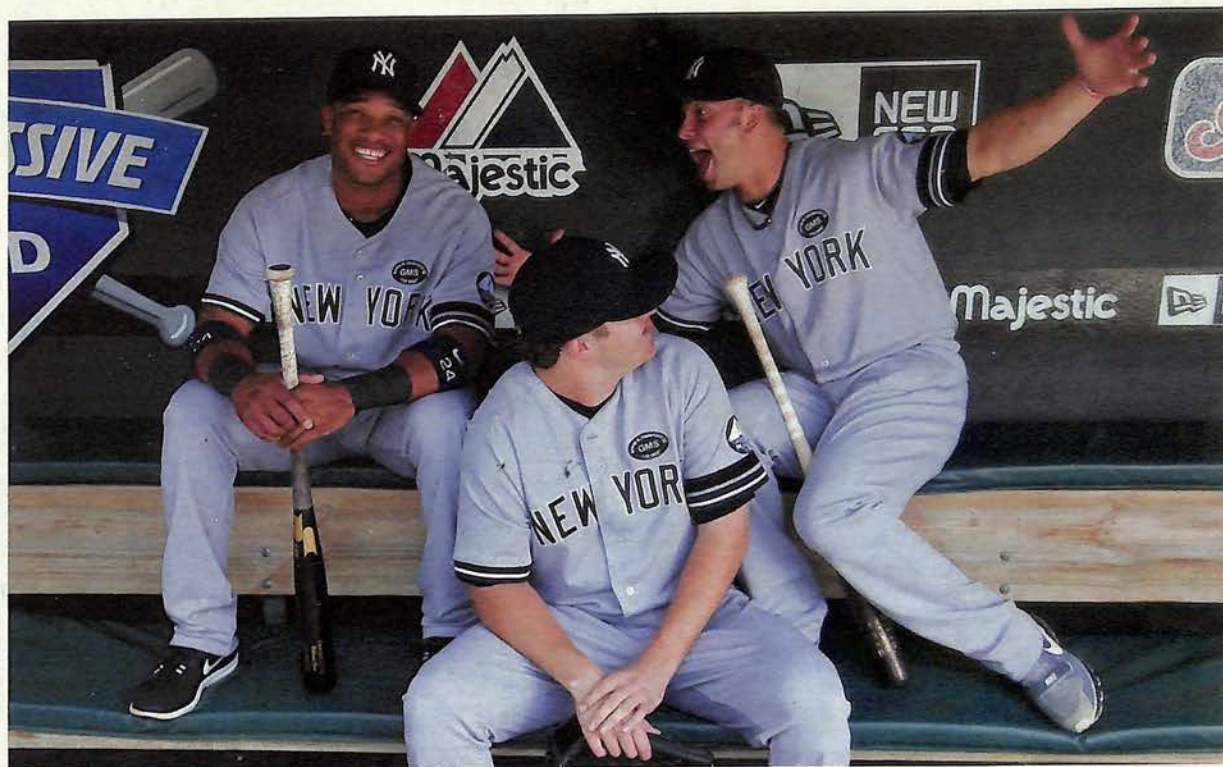
SN: Not that it's necessarily fair to lump you guys together like that, but Yankees are always lumped together. You've got the stratospheric superstars, Jeter and A-Rod. The guys—Rivera, Posada, Pettitte—who've been here for multiple World Series wins. Now, the "other" All-Stars. Does anything get lost in all that?

SWISHER: That right there just goes to show you how amazing it is that you can take the time to categorize the players. Most teams, you don't have to do that. You've got to be pretty fortunate to even be in the conversation here. You look at all three of us guys, maybe we're at that point in our careers, at three different ages, when we're coming into our own.

CANO: Yeah, with these guys you mentioned—Jeter and A-Rod and the ones who have won before—we're more than blessed to be here. But we're part of those guys who came before, won those championships and put the team right on top.

HUGHES: Right. You look in the clubhouse, we don't categorize each other. We're all just like one human trying to pull for the same goal. People say stuff outside, but in there it's just 25 dudes trying to win.

SWISHER: It's just 25 dudes, but it's like there's so much stuff that goes on outside our world that we don't let into our world. And I think that's one of the reasons we've been successful—we don't let all the other stuff affect what we do between the lines.



Yes, (from left) Cano, Hughes and Swisher help make the Yankees' clubhouse a fun place to be, but each adds something key on the field, too.

SN: It sounds nuts to say this about a Yankee, but is Robinson Cano underrated?

SWISHER: There's no doubt about it, man. I've been saying it since the beginning of the year. For some reason, his name isn't as well-touted as it should be. But hey, man, he likes where he is. He's going to keep doing what he's doing.

CANO: Of course. Best team. The media and fans besides, I think I'd rather just be here and try to win every game and win the World Series.

HUGHES: He leads our team in intentional walks, so I think the other teams aren't underrating him.

SWISHER: (Laughs.) Classic! You almost don't want to talk about it—just keep doing what you're doing and not even really worry about it. Let all that stuff take care of itself, and you just keep riding what you want to be riding.

SN: Many Yankees have praised Nick for his clubhouse-loosening personality. Nick, do you ever feel as though you have to be "on" all the time?

SWISHER: That's the thing, man. I know I have a personality, but there's a lot more to it than that. I know I've gotten a lot of credit for coming over and brightening up the clubhouse and this and that, but that wasn't my goal at all.

CANO: He's a funny guy, though.

SWISHER: (Laughs.) My goal was just to come over here and be part of something I've never been a part of before, and in 2009 that happened. And it just so happened that when you come from a bad situation (with the White Sox in 2008) to a good situation, that's when everything changes and that's when my personality really started coming out.

Cano, Hughes and Swisher: The next Lazzeri, Clemens and Murcer?



Former Mets general manager **Steve Phillips**, a baseball analyst for AOL Fanhouse, broke down the progress made by Yankees

All-Stars Robinson Cano, Phil Hughes and Nick Swisher and identified which former Yankees they compare to for *Sporting News*.

➔ **On Robinson Cano:** His numbers match up with a guy from the Murderers Row teams, Tony Lazzeri, but I don't think the Yankees have had a second baseman since whose numbers match up with Cano's.

Another guy whose numbers kind of match up is Don Mattingly. Cano has the offensive capabilities of one of the most beloved Yankees ever, and he's putting them up at second base, not first base. When he first came to the big leagues, I thought his body language wasn't great; he gave up a lot of at-bats. But he's come a long way.

➔ **On Phil Hughes:** He's a tough one, still young, and he has the versatility of having been a reliever and a starter. But if you want to close your eyes and really dream, Hughes has some Roger Clemens in him. He has that power fastball with late life that jumps on hitters and that devastating breaking ball like Clemens had when he first

came to the big leagues. He also has that same athleticism on the mound. He has outstanding command and control as well. He just hasn't quite figured out how to put it all together yet.

➔ **On Nick Swisher:** He's a tough guy. Bobby Murcer's numbers are fairly comparable. He's got a little Paul O'Neill in him as well. Swisher shows up to play every day. He's pretty playful, too—kind of un-Yankee-like in that regard. I would say Swisher is kind of a hybrid of Jason Giambi and Paul O'Neill and Bobby Murcer, although he has more power than O'Neill and less than Giambi.

— As told to Steve Greenberg

SN: What do fans around the country need to know about Phil Hughes?

CANO: Phil? He's funny.

SWISHER: On the mound he's Mr. Collected. He's got his poise and everything, but he ain't like that off the mound.

CANO: He's one of the cool guys in (the clubhouse). It's not the way he looks when he's pitching—he doesn't want to smile or anything—but he's one of the best guys in there. He talks to everybody.

HUGHES: You guys can't get the smiles off your faces.

SWISHER: I think he's more *Office Space* humor.

HUGHES: Yeah, probably. I'm not the guy who's superoutgoing like Nick, but I like to consider myself sort of funny.

SWISHER: That's the big thing—everybody complements each other in their own way.

CANO: He can imitate people, the way they talk.

SWISHER: Oh, he's good at that, man. He can do *anybody*, man. But regardless of the things you don't know about him, the credit that he deserves for this year—I think it's ridiculous that wouldn't be the first thing you would want to know. How amazing of a season is he having? And just to be able to see what he accomplished last year, to take that role on as a setup guy in front of the greatest closer of all time. And then to come into a starting role, win the job out of spring and be an All-Star as a starter? I don't understand why that isn't the top thing to talk about.

CANO: That's true. That's the big thing about him this year. He proved to (the organization) that he's deserving. The way he's pitching is big.

SWISHER: The one thing I think our (starting pitchers) take a lot of pride in is giving us a chance to win. If you can keep the game within a certain amount of runs come the sixth, seventh, eighth, ninth inning, that's really what we thrive on.

HUGHES: All the credit goes to these guys. I mean, you go out there and don't have a great start, give up five runs in six innings, we can still win the game and we know that. We don't give up in the third or fourth innings because we're down three or four runs; we know we have an offense that can score runs. These guys have done it multiple times this year. I haven't pitched well enough to win a lot of the games I've won. But these guys go out there and never give up. They score eight, nine, 10 runs and you've got another win. All the credit goes to these dudes.

SN: Who's the biggest celebrity out of you guys?

HUGHES: Who's got food named after him?

SWISHER: It's all in the personality, man!

HUGHES: Who's got their own chocolate milk in our clubhouse?

SWISHER: I don't know, I have fun with that stuff! I have fun doing that stuff.

CANO: Perfect Hollywood.



Cano (middle) says you can't get help from a legend like Rivera (left) in other places—especially help holding up a World Series trophy.

SN: Nick, are the reports true that you enlisted the help of Tim Tebow to win the hand of your fiancée, actress Joanna Garcia?

SWISHER: Oh, hell no. I did that on my own! I don't need Tim Tebow's help to get engaged. Where in the hell would you get something like that, man?

SN: Oh, it's out there.

SWISHER: You can't believe what you read.

CANO: He doesn't need anybody. He can do what he wants.

SWISHER: I'm an Ohio State guy. Why would I need Tim Tebow?

CANO: You seriously didn't hear about that, Swish?

SWISHER: I didn't!

SN: Personalitywise, what don't fans around the country "get" about Jeter and A-Rod?

CANO: You can see the way they play, how good they are. They're the same way as (people). They're both good guys. They'll talk to anybody in (the clubhouse). They won't be like, "Oh, I'm a superstar." They make jokes with us. If you see the way they treat us in there, you can tell. When the game starts, Jeter is demanding and we'll hear about winning. But in there he's a different guy—the coolest guy I've ever met and a nice person, too.

HUGHES: That's why I said before that there's just 25 guys in there. You can't tell the difference. Just looking at (Jeter), you'd think he was a second-year player. You wouldn't know the difference.

SWISHER: Coming over here from another team, it's intimidating walking into this locker room just because of the names on the plaques. But when you get in there, get to know these guys and the family atmosphere the Yankees bring as an organization, it's a great thing.

SN: This team is on pretty much the same pace as last year's 103-win team. Does that mean it's pretty much as good as last year's team?

SWISHER: Time will tell. That's up to you guys to define all that stuff, man. We just go out there and play the game.

CANO: We're in first place. We're playing great. I know we don't have some of the guys we had last year, but guys here are doing a good job. We've got a lot of games left and need to keep winning.

SN: The Rays are young, talented, confident and right on your heels. They won the American League two years ago. Yet it seems it would be an epic upset—a Yankees disaster—if they won the division. Do you see it that way?

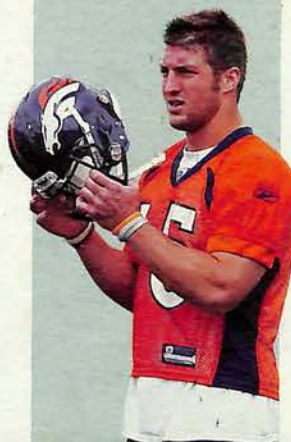
SWISHER: You're looking at three of the most positive people. We don't look at the negative side of things, man.

CANO: We have a great team. They've got a young team but a lot of talent; they play the game the right way, and they're winning. I'd say we both have great teams.

HUGHES: We just want to celebrate on that last day of the season. We don't care about anybody else. If we just worry about what we're doing, we know we can do it.



It makes for a good story, but Swisher says he didn't need Tebow's help to get the girl.



Robinson Cano, Phil Hughes, Nick Swisher

SN: How confident are you about winning another World Series this year?

CANO: We're positive, 100 percent. Our mind is to go out there every day and win the game no matter what happened yesterday, what happened before.

SWISHER: That's a tribute to the guys, man. Everybody brings a great attitude to the ballpark every day.

SN: How are you, and this team, feeling the loss of George Steinbrenner?

HUGHES: I wasn't really around as much as a lot of the other guys were when he was kind of in his prime and around the team a lot, but you can just feel what he's done for this organization. It trickles down to the employees all over the stadium.

CANO: He taught us from the moment you signed for rookie ball, all they teach here is, "Win the game; win the championship. The Boss wants to win." The way they teach you to play the game here, it's all about winning. He changed not only the Yankees; he changed the whole game. Not only Yankees players but the whole major leagues should miss him.

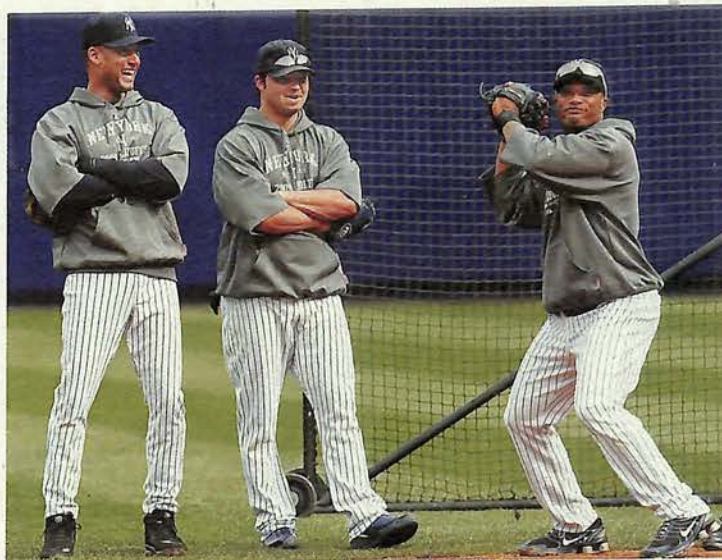
SWISHER: That's the thing. Regardless of all the things he's done for the New York Yankees, you've got to think of all the things he's done in the big picture—for Major League Baseball and all the charity work. That's a great ride for us to represent.

CANO: That's what makes him one of the greatest men in the sport, the things he did off the field. It's easy when you're on the field and you're the owner, but his free time, he gave it to the kids in the community—not only in New York but in Tampa. The Boss should be proud.

SN: Do you think you're better players for being Yankees? Or are you succeeding individually at the same level you would've anywhere else?

CANO: Me, personally, I would say yes. Because you know why? Going through the (minor league system) they teach you to play the game the right way, always be on time. Then you come up here and see guys like Jeter, A-Rod, Posada, Mariano; you see the way they play the game, that they're never late, and it makes you want to be like those guys. ... They work hard, they never complain, they play with pain. That makes you a better player even faster. You're not going to get the same help you get from Derek Jeter, Posada, Mariano in other places.

HUGHES: It's tough to say what would've happened if I'd come up with another team,



According to the younger guys, in the locker room you can't tell Jeter (left) from any other player. "The coolest guy I've ever met," Cano says.

but I just feel so blessed to have been drafted by the Yankees. I got a chance to come up and learn from Mike Mussina, Roger Clemens, Andy Pettitte, all the guys that were in this rotation. Would I have had that anywhere else? No. I got to learn from the best who have ever played this game.

SN: Should Phil Hughes ever have to worry about going back to the bullpen?

CANO: I don't know about that, but that's a good point he made earlier—he feels comfortable anywhere they put him. He's just happy to be here. You know what? I hope he stays (in the rotation). But he's good at both sides, starting or setup man.

HUGHES: Last year, (before) I went to the bullpen, I thought I was being sent down. I'd come up and made some spot starts for Chien-Ming Wang; he was coming back off the D.L., and Joe (Girardi) said, "Come into my office for a second." I was like, *All right, I'm getting sent down.* That was it—I'd never been a reliever before in my life. But he said, "Well, we want to put you in the bullpen for a while." I was pumped up.

CANO: What? I'm gonna stay here?

HUGHES: Exactly. I just rolled with it. I was happy to be able to contribute to one of the best teams that baseball has ever seen last year.

SN: Look ahead five years. Do you imagine yourselves all still Yankees, two of you everyday stalwarts and the other an anchor in the rotation?

SWISHER: That would be a major blessing, no doubt, and something we all would sign up for right now. We know what we have over here. Not only that, but the friendships and the personal relationships that we've gained. These guys are my boys.

HUGHES: It's almost like it's not up to us at this point. I think all of us want to be here; it's just a matter of if we can continue to play well enough to where we're wanted here. I think a

lot of guys have power over their teams, but in the N-Y they kind of have the power over you. They're going to get the best guys out there. You've just got to make sure you stay up here so you can be asked to come back.

CANO: Guys, we've just got to stay together so we can be the core three. (Laughs and high-fives all around.)

SN: The "25 players, 25 cabs" days are long over. But let's see how well you know one another. What sport other than baseball did Robinson excel at in high school in the Dominican?

SWISHER: Soccer!

CANO: Geez, man.

HUGHES: What else they got other than soccer?

CANO: Bank robber.

HUGHES: (Laughs.) What was it?

SWISHER: Wait. Basketball?

CANO: Yeah.

HUGHES: Point guard?

CANO: Yeah. But my dad was a baseball player in the Dominican. He said, "For you to make it to the NBA, you've got to go to the U.S. and go to school. It's easier to play baseball. That's what your family knows, and then you can make your way to the top." So I chose baseball.

SN: Are you suggesting you could've made it to the NBA?

CANO: I would say no.

SWISHER: (Laughs.) No way, dude.

CANO: I'm only 6 feet tall. But I was good.

SWISHER: He wasn't NBA-good.

SN: Same question about Nick.

HUGHES: I know you played football.

SWISHER: I loved it to death. I think the greatest thing that I loved was regardless of how bad a day you were having, you could physically take it out. In baseball, man, if you're having a bad day, the angrier you go to the plate, the less success you have. I loved that aggression side of it.

SN: Lastly, what major league team did Phil grow up rooting for? (Hughes is from Southern California.)

SWISHER: We're talking Cali? The Dodgers?

HUGHES: No.

SWISHER: The Oakland A's?

HUGHES: Big Sox fan.

SWISHER: The ChiSox!

HUGHES: No.

CANO: What? Oh, man.

SWISHER: Oh, man!

SN: The Red Sox. How sick is that?

HUGHES: Let's try to keep it under wraps around here, all right? I'd appreciate that.

Make room for more star power

SN baseball writer Stan McNeal took a stab at projecting the Yankees' 2011 nucleus, and three former Yankees dissected the possible moves.



LINEUP

SS **Derek Jeter**

RF **Nick Swisher**

2B **Robinson Cano**

3B **Alex Rodriguez**

1B **Mark Teixeira**

DH **ADAM DUNN** They'll opt for power over speed (Carl Crawford) and still have money for a pitcher.

C **Jorge Posada**

CF **Curtis Granderson**

LF **Brett Gardner**



BULLPEN

RHP **Joba Chamberlain**

LHP **ARTHUR RHODES** The 41-year-old will cash in on a big season.

RHP **Mariano Rivera**



ROTATION

LHP **CC Sabathia**

LHP **CLIFF LEE** This time, the Yankees will get their man.

RHP **A.J. Burnett**

RHP **Phil Hughes**

LHP **Andy Pettitte**



➔ Former Yankees reliever **MIKE STANTON** says: "The biggest addition in that group is Cliff Lee; games are won and lost by starting pitching. Adam is a perfect complement to that lineup. He is one of those players who goes against the norm—high strikeouts with high home runs but with high on-base percentage. Put him in the sixth spot and he might drive in 125 runs. Rhodes would also be a great addition; he dominates lefties and still gets out righties. Without these players, the Yankees are the pick in the A.L. East. With these players, it'll only make that gap much larger."



➔ Former Yankees shortstop and manager **BUCKY DENT** says: "Sometimes it takes time for some of those guys to get used to what being a Yankee is all about—as you know, some guys in the past have struggled with it. It seems like this year and last year they had a great chemistry. They had guys who knew what their roles were, and I think that's important to do that. Would it surprise me (if they acquired Lee, Dunn and Rhodes)? No."



➔ Former Yankees catcher **JIM LEYRITZ** says: "Cliff Lee is a possibility, yes, with Andy Pettitte probably retiring. No to Arthur Rhodes; he's 40, and the Yanks have enough young arms. Adam Dunn? No. ... They will add other players as always, but the team will still be the second-best team in the A.L. East, with Tampa still my favorite as far as being young, getting better and having the desire to win. The Yankees will once again be very good, though. Sometimes experience still wins out."

— Ken Bradley, Steve Greenberg

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HERE **TODAY,** HERE TO **STAY**

BASEBALL'S LEADERBOARDS ARE FILLING UP WITH FRESH FACES WHO INTEND TO STICK AROUND FOR A WHILE

Text by Stan McNeal

Photo by Pouya Dianat / Atlanta Braves

MARTIN PRADO

2B, **BRAVES**

.315 batting average → 5th in N.L. → 13th in majors

WE SHOULD HAVE KNOWN

Since signing as a 17-year-old in 2001, Prado has always hit. In four seasons as a Braves utilityman, he batted .307. When he filled in for second baseman Kelly Johnson last July, he led Atlanta with 30 hits in 18 games. So it was hardly surprising when manager Bobby Cox proclaimed at last year's winter meetings: "He will start somewhere. He's got to." The Braves dumped Johnson a week later.

I ALWAYS KNEW

Prado says: "At the time Bobby told me I had a regular job last year, I was like, 'OK, now I'm going to make this happen. I'm going to prove why he's making that decision.' It gave me confidence to know I would have that job, but I remember like yesterday when I was a utility guy. Whenever you remember where you come from, you're going to work harder. I don't think about the batting title. My goal is to help this team get to the playoffs. It would be selfish to care about my numbers. When we clinch, maybe then I will look at them."

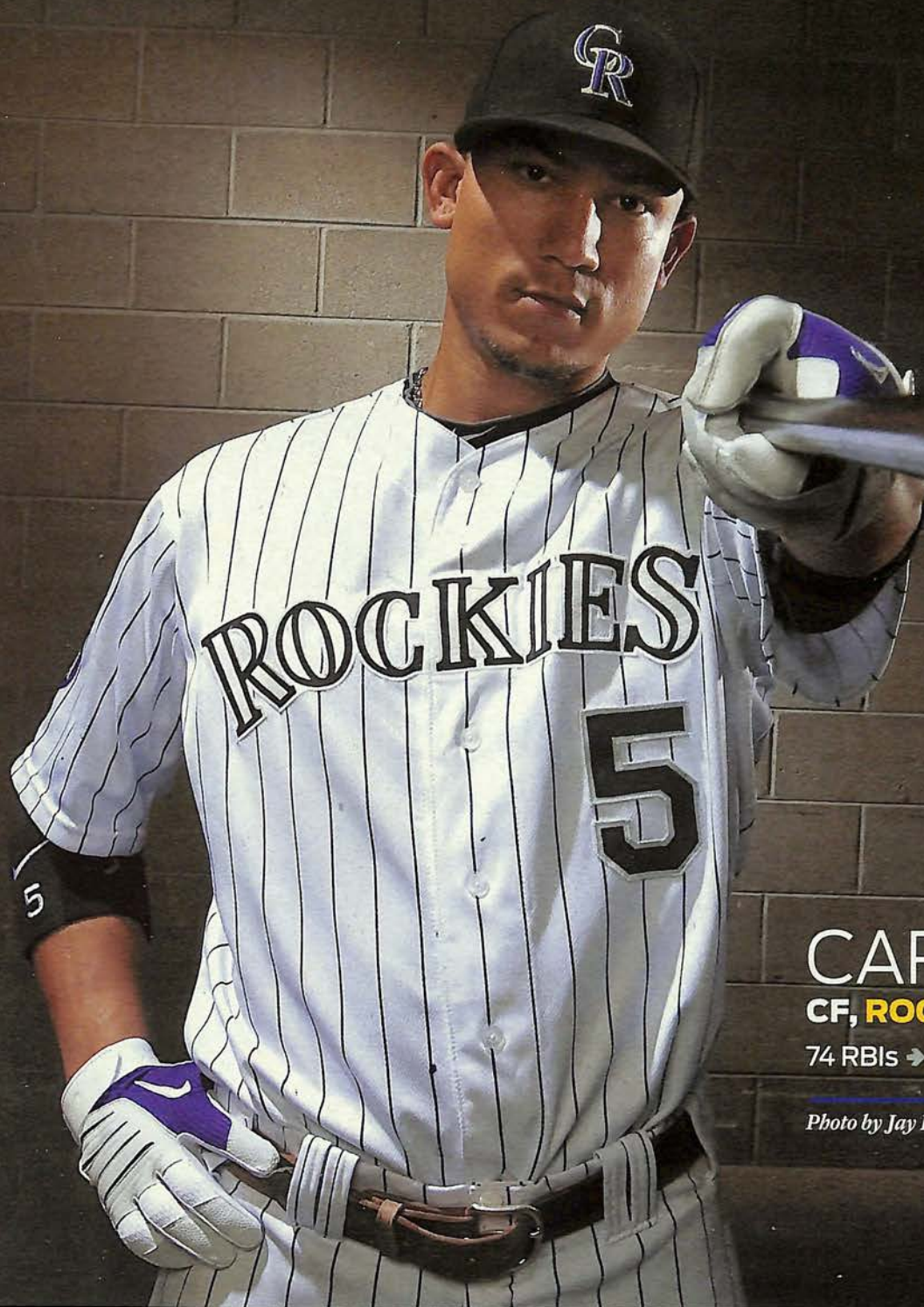
I THOUGHT I KNEW, BUT HE'S EVEN BETTER THAN I'D HOPED



Braves SP Tim Hudson says: "I can tell you this: If he wasn't in our lineup every day, we wouldn't be in first place. For years, I thought he was one of the better players on our team, even when he wasn't playing every day. To see him hit the ground running like he has makes me sit back and smile. He could have been doing this two or three years ago."

WHO ELSE IS NEW?

First-time top 20 in batting average		BA	Previous best
1.	JOSH HAMILTON, Rangers	.354	.304 (24th) in 2008
6.	DELMON YOUNG, Twins	.325	.290 (51st) in 2008
8.	CARLOS GONZALEZ, Rockies	.321	First-time qualifier
12.	RAFAEL FURCAL, Dodgers	.316	.300 (37th) in 2006
14.	MARLON BYRD, Cubs	.313	.303 (33rd) in 2003
17.	ANGEL PAGAN, Mets	.309	First-time qualifier
19.	AUBREY HUFF, Giants	.307	.311 (21st) in 2003
20.	BILLY BUTLER, Royals	.306	.301 (36th) in 2009



CARLOS GONZALEZ

CF, **ROCKIES**

74 RBIs → 6th in N.L. → 15th in majors

Photo by Jay Drowns / SN

WE SHOULD HAVE KNOWN

He was barely 23 and Gonzalez had already been in two major trades, moving from the Diamondbacks to the A's for Dan Haren and on to the Rockies for Matt Holliday. That can happen when you're a legitimate five-tool prospect and tool No. 1 is hitting. Gonzalez struggled in his first month after being called up by the Rockies last season, but manager Jim Tracy told him he would be staying in the lineup. Gonzalez started hitting—with authority—and hasn't stopped.

I ALWAYS KNEW

Gonzalez says: "The key to driving in runs is getting the opportunities. I've always felt comfortable hitting in those situations. When I was leading off earlier this season, I felt like I was getting more chances than everybody and I was getting the job done. I've been hitting third now, and I get a lot more opportunities. I want to be successful every time, to execute and get the run home. I feel good hitting in the 3 hole. I guess that's where everybody wants to be. You want the responsibility of hitting in the middle of the lineup."

I THOUGHT I KNEW, BUT HE'S EVEN BETTER THAN I'D HOPED



Rockies SS

Troy Tulowitzki

says: "Not many people know about him, but he's going

to be a superstar. I'd put my money on it. I saw it coming earlier this year when I hit with him nearly every day in the cage. You could see him get better every day starting in spring training. He's already there with the best players I've been teammates with. He can do everything."

WHO ELSE IS NEW?

First-time top 20 in RBIs

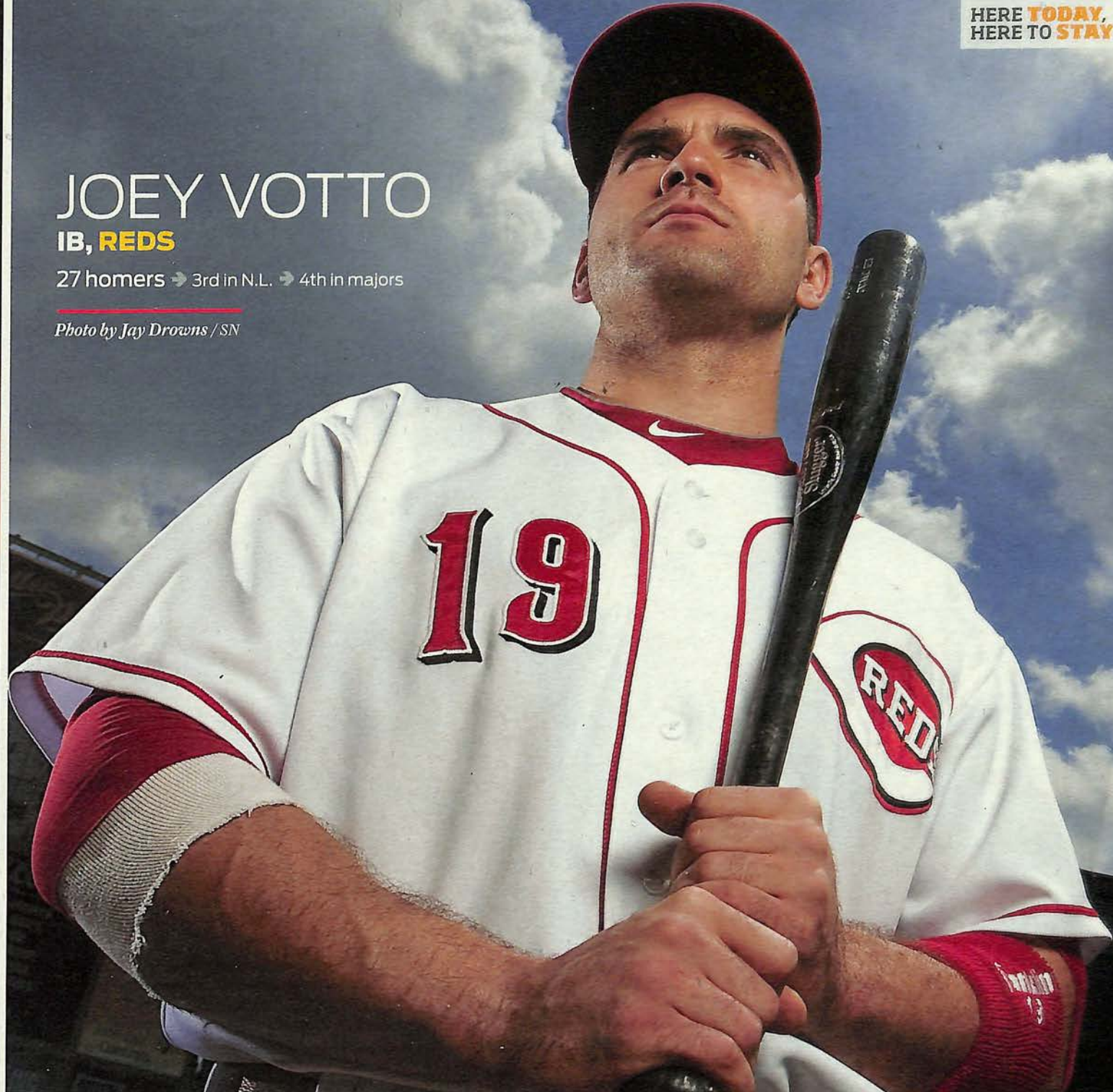
		RBIs	Previous best
4.	JOSE BAUTISTA, Blue Jays	85	63 (131st) in 2007
5.	DELMON YOUNG, Twins	83	93 (47th) in 2007
13.	COREY HART, Brewers	75	91 (42nd) in 2008
16.	JOEY VOTTO, Reds	74	84 (63rd) in 2008 and 2009
16.	ADAM LAROCHE, Diamondbacks	73	90 (56th) in 2006
19.	ROBINSON CANO, Yankees	72	97 (37th) in 2007
20.	RICKIE WEEKS, Brewers	71	46 (195th) in 2008

JOEY VOTTO

IB, **REDS**

27 homers → 3rd in N.L. → 4th in majors

Photo by Jay Drowns / SN



WE SHOULD HAVE KNOWN

If not for three weeks spent on the disabled list because of stress issues, 2009 could have been Votto's breakout season. Considering he hit .322 with 25 homers, maybe it was. Because of the 26-year-old's size (6-3, 229) and potential—the Reds drafted him in the second round in 2002—it has always been a matter of when, not if, he would become one of the game's premier sluggers.

I ALWAYS KNEW

Votto says: "From the standpoint of being voted into the All-Star Game (in the final online balloting), I guess you can look at this as a breakout year. I thought I played good baseball last year. This year, it's been my defense that has improved. At the plate, I'm still just trying to be an efficient hitter. I want to get as much as I can out of every at-bat, to take the best pitch and put the ball in play. If that means home runs, great. If that means getting on base for my teammates, that's great, too."

I THOUGHT I KNEW, BUT HE'S EVEN BETTER THAN I'D HOPED



Reds 3B

Scott Rolen says:

"He's too good a hitter to be called a power hitter, but he has power. What's good about his power is that it's to the middle and opposite fields. Those are his best swings, without a doubt. We'll be in batting practice and I'll pull a ball out of the ballpark. Then he'll hit it farther to what is the opposite field for him."

WHO ELSE IS NEW?

First-time top 20 in home runs

		HRs	Previous best
1.	JOSE BAUTISTA , Blue Jays	34	15 (111th) in 2008
9.	JOSH HAMILTON , Rangers	24	32 (22nd) in 2008
9.	CARLOS GONZALEZ , Rockies	24	13 (139th) in 2009
14.	COREY HART , Brewers	23	24 (47th) in 2007
14.	RICKIE WEEKS , Brewers	23	16 (113th) in 2007
18.	VERNON WELLS , Blue Jays	22	33 (21st) in 2003



NEFTALI FELIZ

CLOSER, **RANGERS**

29 Saves → 3rd in A.L. → 6th in majors

Photo by Jay Drowns / SN

WE SHOULD HAVE KNOWN

The Rangers were aware they were getting an electric arm when they acquired Feliz from the Braves in the 2007 Mark Teixeira trade. Feliz, 22, was called up last August and has been dominant since. He allowed one run in his first 22 innings and finished the season with a 1.74 ERA. Coming into 2010, the only question was: starter or reliever? He assumed the closer job early and hasn't looked back. Neither have the Rangers.

I ALWAYS KNEW

Feliz says: "When they told me I was going to get a chance to close, I was ready. I had been preparing myself and was ready for anything. I said I would do whatever was best for the team. There's more pressure pitching in the ninth inning, but it's not that different than the seventh or eighth. The biggest difference is I attack hitters more aggressively. When I face a batter, I come after him with my best pitch right from the get-go. So far, that has been working for me."

I THOUGHT I KNEW, BUT HE'S EVEN BETTER THAN I'D HOPED



Rangers LF
Josh Hamilton

says: "When I found out he was taking over, I was

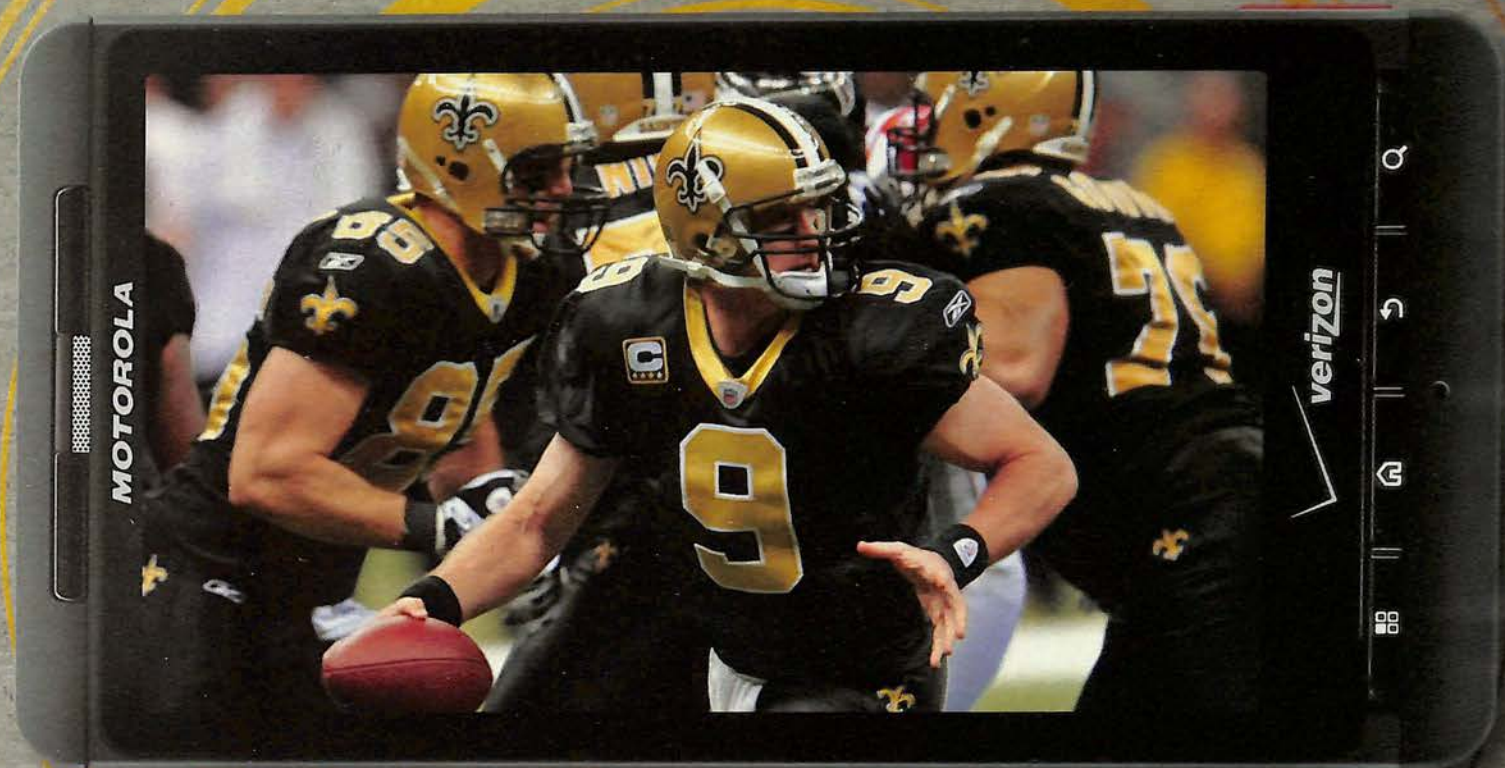
not exactly worried but maybe concerned a little. Obviously, he's young, and I didn't know how he would handle an outing that didn't go well. But he's responded. He's only had a couple (bad outings), but he's come back the next night and done fine. The thing is, he will get better with experience. He's going to be a dominant closer."

SN

WHO ELSE IS NEW?

First-time top 20 in saves

	SYs	Previous best
15. MATT LINDSTROM , Astros	22	15 (30th) in 2009
16. JON RAUCH , Twins	21	18 (23rd) in 2008



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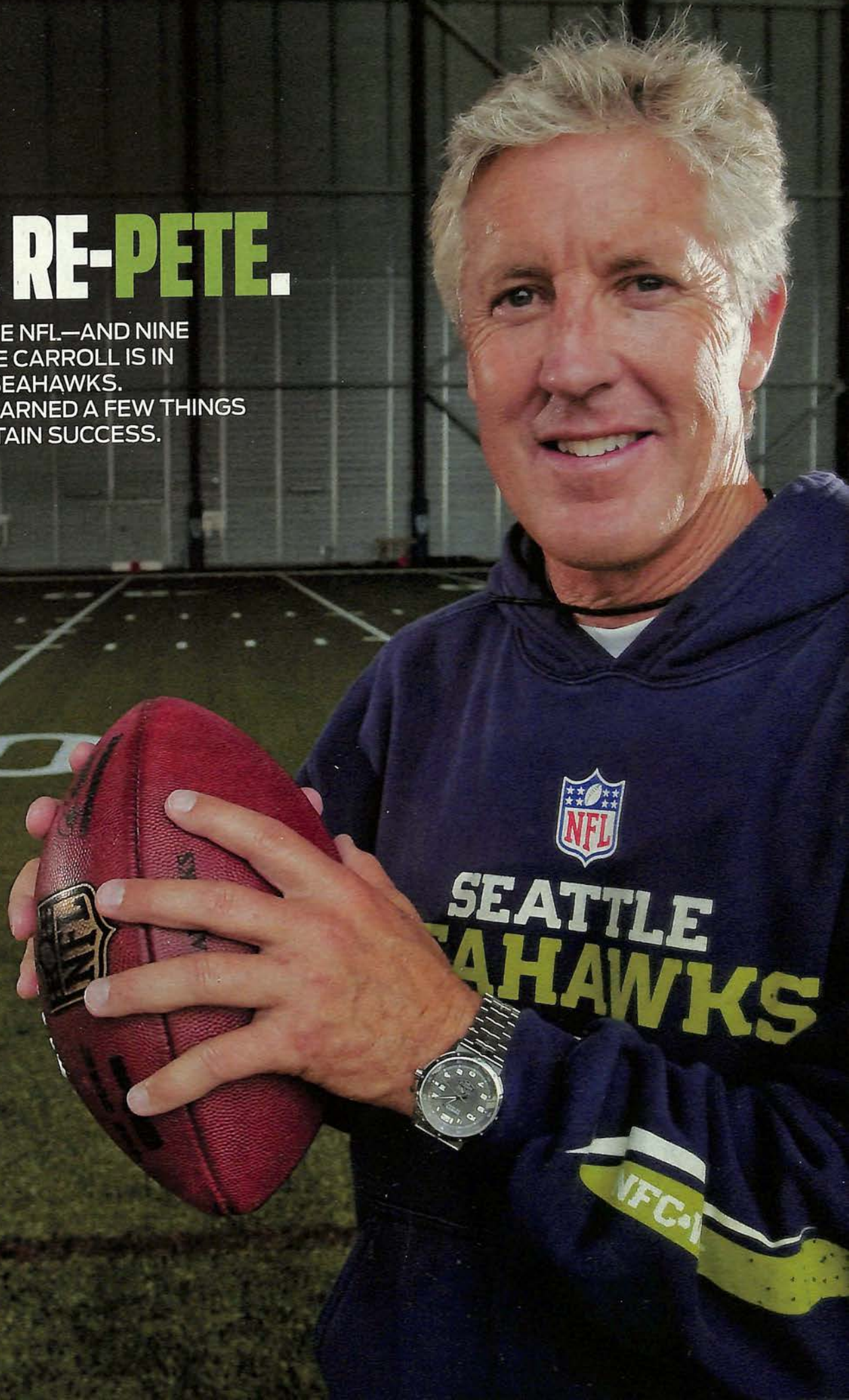
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WASH. WIN. RE-PETE.

ELEVEN YEARS AFTER LEAVING THE NFL—AND NINE AFTER TAKING OVER AT USC—PETE CARROLL IS IN WASHINGTON AS COACH OF THE SEAHAWKS. HIS PLAYERS WILL TELL YOU HE LEARNED A FEW THINGS ON CAMPUS ABOUT HOW TO SUSTAIN SUCCESS.

By Dennis Dillon

Photo by Jay Drowns / SN





As he looks out the window of his second-floor office, absorbing a picturesque view that draws his eyes across the blue surface of Lake Washington to the pricey mansions set in the hills of Mercer Island, he feels like a born-again NFL coach.

He *is* born again. Eleven years and three times zones removed from his last job in the league, Pete Carroll can't help but feel replenished blood coursing through his veins. "I'm more confident, more sure of how I feel about stuff," he says. "That's what's made all the difference."

It wasn't like that for Carroll during his salad days as an NFL head coach, first with the Jets (1994) and then with the Patriots ('97-99). His philosophy was too broad, his control too minimal and the trust from his players too polarized.

Fired by the Patriots, he had a year to reflect and regroup—during that time he was influenced by the writings and wisdom of John Wooden—before

finding his coaching niche at USC. There, during nine highly successful years as head coach, he led the Trojans to seven consecutive Pac-10 titles and two national championships.

Although he is 58 and NCAA sanctions took some of the luster off his college accomplishments, Carroll is approaching his job as first-year coach of the Seahawks with the same energy and enthusiasm he displayed at USC.

"What really comes across is every morning, come 7 o'clock, he's ready to go," says linebacker Lofa Tatupu, who played for Carroll at USC. "We're coming in for the first meeting, our bodies have barely recovered from yesterday, and he is up there like he just had a Red Bull."

Seven months after he was hired in Seattle, the first impression Carroll leaves on his players while molding his inaugural Seahawks roster will set the tone for the reboot of his NFL career. As training camp began in Renton, Wash., a handful of things were apparent.

1 PLAYER WHO WAS ON CARROLL'S LAST NFL TEAM SAYS HE'S MORE IN COMMAND NOW

SAFETY LAWYER MILLOY, A STARTER

ON CARROLL'S PATRIOTS TEAMS: "IT'S ALL ABOUT, FIRST AND FOREMOST, HAVING A LITTLE MORE CONTROL THAN HE HAD THEN TO BRING IN PLAYERS AND HAVE A LITTLE MORE SAY-SO WITH UPPER MANAGEMENT."

In New England, Carroll's control didn't extend much beyond the practice field and meeting rooms. The personnel department determined which players came and went, but Carroll now wields that power in Seattle.

During the draft, the Seahawks traded for former Titans running back LenDale White, who played for Carroll at USC. When it didn't work out—the Seahawks decided White wasn't the right fit—Carroll released him.

"I think he's very clear in his vision," says Milloy, who was persuaded to come back for a 15th NFL season after he noticed a "more refreshed coach" when he and Carroll sat down for an offseason conversation. "Anybody who doesn't fit in—players, coaches—he's made quick decisions to get rid of them. Before, he had to hold on to them because he didn't have the control. I think that's the biggest difference."

One thing that hasn't changed for Carroll is his passion for football. He arrives at work every day with his eyes wide-open and his adrenaline pumping. Wearing a gray hoodie (Bill Belichick Great Northwest?) and khaki pants, Carroll bounds around the field, clapping and encouraging his players. Early in practice, the Seahawks split into offensive and defensive units, then line up and run over a series of bags while assistant coaches bark like drill sergeants.

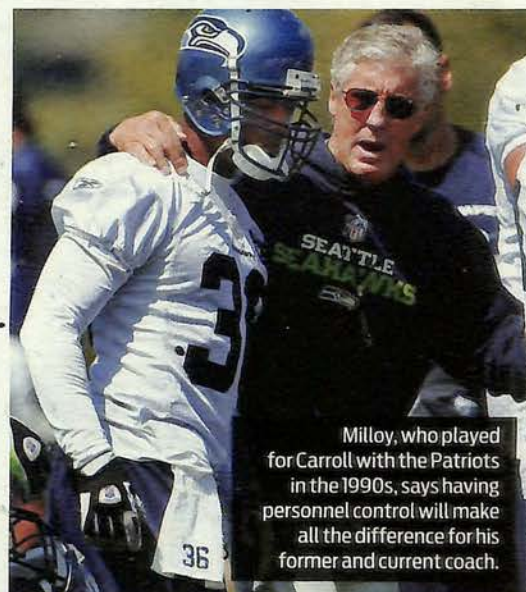
"It's a good way to start off practice," Milloy says. "I actually did it with two other coaches when we were in New England: Bill Parcells and Bill Belichick. I think it's a great deal to get your blood flowing and setting the tone for the tempo of practice. If you're sluggish that day individually, somebody will run you over. You hear coaches yelling. It sounds like a military

drill. It sets the tone for the rest of the day."

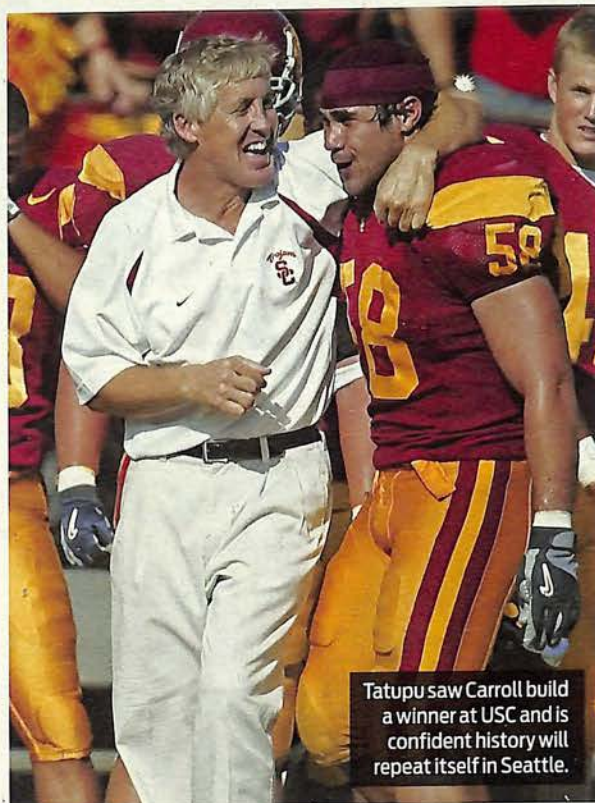
Carroll is a different coach than he was in New England. And it starts with a newfound confidence and conviction.

"I thought I knew what was important to me at that time, but I really hadn't investigated it enough," he says. "Now I feel like I really know."

"It's more like everything is clear because I made some really concrete decisions on approach. I feel more strongly about philosophy and the way we work and practice. I'm more committed to the way we do things and the language we use and the priorities and expectations we set—all of those things."



Milloy, who played for Carroll with the Patriots in the 1990s, says having personnel control will make all the difference for his former and current coach.



Tatupu saw Carroll build a winner at USC and is confident history will repeat itself in Seattle.

8 PLAYERS WHO WERE WITH CARROLL AT USC SAY HE HAS A SIMILAR COACHING STYLE IN THE NFL

LINEBACKER LOFA TATUPU, IN HIS SIXTH YEAR WITH THE SEAHAWKS: "A LOT OF THE THINGS WE DO ARE SIMILAR TO WHAT WE WERE DOING AND HAD SUCCESS WITH AT USC. AND I THINK GUYS ARE TAKING TO IT REALLY WELL."

When you play for Pete Carroll, it doesn't take long to learn the things he stresses: doing things right, giving maximum effort, being accountable to your teammates and, most of all, being competitive. It doesn't matter whether you're the No. 1 quarterback or a third-string guard, every player has a chance to win a job.

"Coming in here, I knew one thing for sure, one thing I could hang my hat on. I was going to get a chance to compete," says former USC wide receiver Mike Williams, who has yet to lay down roots in the NFL even though he was a first-round draft pick by the Lions in 2005 and had subsequent chances with the Titans and Raiders.

"I'm excited because it's similar to when I got to SC. The pieces are starting to come together. We were getting good freshmen and getting other guys. You're just excited about what it's going to look like when we go against guys with other helmets."

Tatupu remembers the first day of player meetings this offseason, when Carroll sat in on the defense's meeting. With linebackers coach

Ken Norton also there—Norton is one of eight coaches Carroll brought with him to Seattle from USC—Tatupu felt like he was back in college.

"All these guys haven't had the privilege I had of working with these coaches and coaches like them," Tatupu says. "I'm not saying no one else had great coaching in college, but we had really elite coaches as far as I'm concerned. And we were schooled on all the little things that made a difference."

Carroll isn't all business all the time. He knows when to add a touch of levity. Toward the end of the team's OTAs, when energy levels were starting to sag a bit, Carroll brought in comedian Rob Riggle to address the team.

That reminded defensive end Lawrence Jackson of the time an ostensibly angry Carroll stormed out during a team meeting at USC.

"When he came back in, he's wearing one of the racing suits from *Talladega Nights*," Jackson says. "A few seconds later, Will Ferrell comes in in his Wonder Bread suit and we went to see the movie. It was pretty funny."

40 PLAYERS WHO WERE ON LAST YEAR'S ROSTER SAY HE'S TREATING THEM WITH RESPECT—WHILE CHALLENGING THEM AT THE SAME TIME

QUARTERBACK MATT HASSELBECK, THE FIRST PLAYER CARROLL CONTACTED AFTER HE GOT THE SEAHAWKS JOB: "HE'S VERY APPROACHABLE. BUT YOU FEEL LIKE EVERY TIME HE'S TALKING TO YOU HE'S TESTING YOU, HE'S EVALUATING YOU. HE'S PUSHING YOU, HE'S TRYING TO GET YOU TO THINK THE WAY HE THINKS."

After an exchange of voicemails on the January night Carroll was named Seahawks coach—he later texted Hasselbeck after he and his family had celebrated by going to see *Avatar*, but by that time Hasselbeck was asleep in bed—coach and quarterback talked the next day.

Hasselbeck was still recovering from an '09 season during which he had suffered a rib injury and played poorly down the stretch. He was feeling sorry for the coaches who had just been fired. And he was wondering who was going to steer the ship after the Seahawks, the dominant team in the NFC West from 2004-07, had gone 4-12 and 5-11 in back-to-back seasons.

"I got on the phone with him, and he was like 'Here's my plan, here's my vision, here's who I am,'" Hasselbeck says. "He

talked about 'You and me, we've got to be thinking the same. I need the quarterback to be on point with what I'm thinking. I like to go for it on fourth down.' He probably was evaluating me at the time because he evaluates everyone all the time."

By the time the call ended, Carroll had changed Hasselbeck's mindset.

"I was fired up. I was jacked up," Hasselbeck says. "Even though it had been one of the hardest years of my life footballwise, I kind of felt like I was ready to go again."

Another thing that came across in Carroll's message was that there was going to be competition at every position. No player's job was slam-dunk safe, not even the team's primary starting quarterback for the past nine years. That was evidenced

when Carroll traded for Charlie Whitehurst in March and signed J.P. Losman in May to challenge Hasselbeck.

"I think probably the best thing he's done is the competitiveness, which is kind of how it should be in an NFL locker room," says seventh-year defensive tackle Craig Terrill. "Nobody's relaxed. Nobody's saying, 'OK, I know my spot for 2010. I really don't have to do much.'"

"You have to go out there and show him what you can do. A lot of new eyes are watching you."

So far, Carroll has been very approachable. He is a frequent visitor in the locker room and has invited players to come to his office. Marcus Trufant, an eighth-year cornerback who previously played for Mike Holmgren and the younger Jim Mora in Seattle, has noticed Carroll's humor and penchant for joking at the appropriate time.

"Coach Holmgren was kind of the same way," Trufant says, "but you saw him more like a teacher. With Pete, it's different. Instead of going to the principal's office, it's like you're going to see a cousin or an older brother."



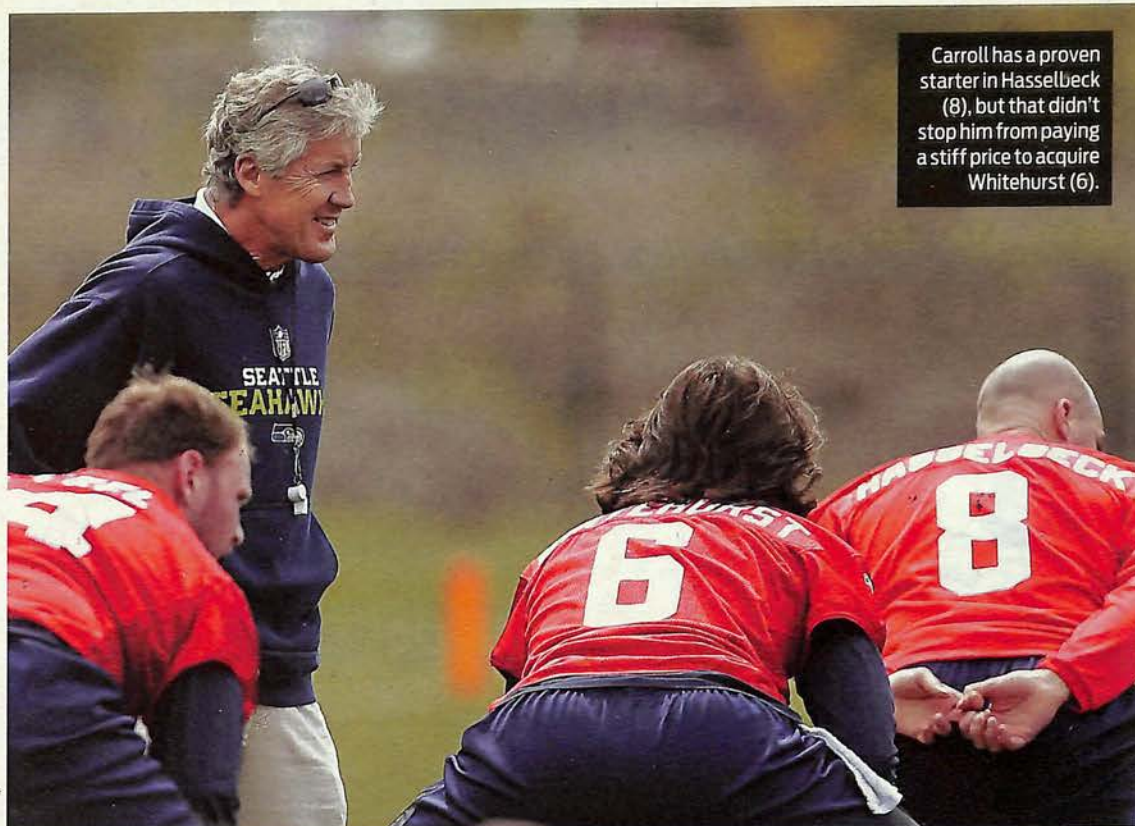
Matt Hasselbeck

CARROLL AND TATUPU: JASON CHAN / US PRESSWIRE; HASSELBECK: TED S. WARREN / AP



ADD BUFFALO WINGS, AND YOU PRETTY MUCH HAVE A MOBILE SPORTS BAR.





Carroll has a proven starter in Hasselbeck (8), but that didn't stop him from paying a stiff price to acquire Whitehurst (6).

19 VETERAN PLAYERS HE ADDED SAY CARROLL ISN'T AFRAID TO MAKE BOLD MOVES

QUARTERBACK CHARLIE WHITEHURST, ACQUIRED IN A TRADE WITH THE CHARGERS:

"I THINK HE'S PROBABLY NOT AFRAID TO DO SOME THINGS. HE DOESN'T DO THINGS EXACTLY THE SAME WAY AS A LOT OF OTHER PEOPLE."

Most coaches wouldn't have the chutzpah to give up a third-round draft pick for a quarterback who has been in the league for four years but has never thrown a pass in a regular-season game. Carroll isn't like most coaches. He knew that if he wanted to get his message across to players about competition, he needed to create it at the most important position.

"I think that's the boldest thing we've done," Carroll says, referring to the trade for Whitehurst. "We got a lot of scrutiny for that."

Seahawks general manager John Schneider worked out Whitehurst when he came out of Clemson as a junior. And after studying four years of preseason film on Whitehurst, Schneider and Carroll concluded that the quarterback had plenty of arm strength and athletic ability. Bottom line: Whitehurst has a chance to be the Seahawks' quarterback of the future.

"I look at it as an opportunity to come to an organization where exciting things are in the future," Whitehurst says. "It's really an attractive place to

play, with good leadership."

Trading for Whitehurst isn't the only example of Carroll's risk-taking. He also acquired former Jets running back Leon Washington, who was coming of a gruesome leg injury.

"One thing I've noticed about Pete and John Schneider is they're bringing a lot of guys in and creating a lot of competition all over the board," says sixth-year linebacker Matt McCoy, who played previously with the Eagles, Saints and Bucs. "They're always bringing guys in and pushing other guys to work harder and step their game up."

Don't expect the brazen moves to stop when the games start.

"He's a high-risk coach," says Seahawks offensive coordinator Jeremy Bates, who had the same position at USC last year. "He believes if we prepare and our players are focused, then let's be aggressive. And that's a fun part of being an offensive coordinator. He's willing to take shots at any time. We talk on the headset, and he encourages taking shots."

5 things I learned at USC that will help me in the NFL

By Seahawks coach Pete Carroll



1. You have to have a philosophy. I don't think you're anywhere unless you do. To do that, you have to figure out yourself first and know what's important to you. You've got to make a decision

on what all those things are, you have to make sure the decision fits you, and then you have to stay with that philosophy to make it stronger. The philosophy has to be so clear you can teach your coaches, so that they can be disciples and extensions of you.

2. Good practices are critical. The organization that it takes, the attention to detail, the discipline that's necessary and the energy it takes—you have to demonstrate all of that on a regular basis to maintain a really high level of practice.

3. You have to surround yourself with coaches willing to carry the message for you. We need guys who are willing to show up every day with enthusiasm and passion for the game and exhibit that to their players. I brought (linebackers coach) Ken Norton Jr., (offensive coordinator) Jeremy Bates and (special teams coordinator) Brian Schneider with me from SC. Those are huge. It gets me the message on defense, it gets me the leader on offense, and it gets me the leader on special teams.

4. Competition is vital. When you involve competition in your program as your central theme, it gives you the vehicle to convey your message. That's an enormous asset. You can keep everybody involved all the time in getting better. You're always pushing to improve.

5. Knowing you can deal only with the things you can control is powerful. Maximize what's in your control. That's a really important part of our approach. You get away from worrying about other teams, other people's opinions, things you can't control, and you maximize your own performance. That's a huge element of what we try to convey.

— As told to Dennis Dillon

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Tate, a second-round choice, is one of three big-name picks in Carroll's first draft class.

9 PLAYERS WHO WERE IN CARROLL'S FIRST DRAFT SAY HE'S LOOKING FOR COMPETITORS

FORMER NOTRE DAME WIDE RECEIVER GOLDEN TATE, THE SEAHAWKS' SECOND-ROUND DRAFT PICK: "FROM PLAYING AGAINST HIM (IN COLLEGE) AND WHAT I CAN SEE, HE LOOKS FOR THE TYPE OF GUY WHO WILL COMPETE."

A former USC coach drafting a former Notre Dame player? That borders on heresy. "It hurt me a little bit, but it was for the team, you know," Carroll says, kidding.

With two of the first 14 picks overall, Carroll and Schneider had a chance to land two star players. Knowing that perennial Pro Bowl left tackle Walter Jones was leaning toward retirement, they selected Oklahoma State's Russell Okung with the sixth pick. Looking for a playmaker to add to their secondary, they chose Texas safety Earl Thomas at No. 14. Surprised that Tate was still available at 60 overall—the team had him rated as a first-rounder—the Seahawks made him their third pick.

"I think he saw my competitiveness," Tate says, "and just because I'm 5-10 doesn't mean I'm not going to compete for each and every ball that's thrown my way. Plus, I played against (Carroll) three years straight. My best game against (USC) was last year. They hadn't been scored on through the air, and I caught two touchdowns and had 117 yards. I think right then and there is when he knew that I'm going to compete."

As a college head coach who played against some of the best players in the country, Carroll had a perspective NFL scouts don't have in evaluating players. He saw up close what a lot of prospects could do on the field.

"Obviously, he likes the way I play, so I'm not going to change anything," Thomas says. "I'm just going to do what I've been doing since high school and in college—just flying around, making plays for the defense."

What kind of tone did Carroll's first draft set for the future of the franchise?

"I think just wide-open competition and an open-minded approach to acquisition," Schneider says. "We share the same philosophy in that we're trying to find football players and not try to fit square pegs in round holes."

SN

Almost every Sunday will feel like Saturday

Not every team has a USC alum who was coached by Pete Carroll. It just seems that way. During his first season as Seahawks coach, Carroll will cross paths with 15 former players.



2010 SEATTLE SEAHAWKS SCHEDULE



WEEK	OPPONENT	
Week 1 SEPT 12	49ers	Trojans reunion: S Taylor Mays, G Chilo Rachal Message for Pete: MAYS SAYS: "I feel like I'm learning more technique than I ever have before, and that's what's new for me. I never really played with technique before. I feel better doing that now. ... It's allowing me to play faster."
Week 14 DEC 12	49ers	
Week 7 OCT 24	Cardinals	Trojans reunion: TE Dominique Byrd, QB Matt Leinart, G Deuce Lutui Message for Pete: LEINART SAYS: "Be ready for the Cardinals. No, I'm just kidding. ... He's going to be who he is, and that's why people love him. I'm just excited to go against him because I've talked to him about how he has to be ready for us."
Week 10 NOV 14	Cardinals	
Week 9 NOV 7	Giants	Trojans reunion: WR Steve Smith, CB Terrell Thomas Message for Pete: SMITH SAYS: "Good luck, pretty much. I can't wait for the opportunity to go out and make plays against him, against his defense, because he likes defense. The NFL is a little different. He knows that. Good luck to him."
Week 11 NOV 21	Saints	Trojans reunion: OT Charles Brown, RB Reggie Bush, DT Sedrick Ellis Message for Pete: ELLIS SAYS: "He taught me well, so watch out."
Week 12 NOV 28	Chiefs	Trojans reunion: QB Matt Cassel Message for Pete: CASSEL SAYS: "He doesn't need any advice from me. He has plenty of experience and he's won in the NFL before, so I'm sure he'll be fine."
Week 13 DEC 5	Panthers	Trojans reunion: WR Dwayne Jarrett, C Ryan Kalil Message for Pete: KALIL SAYS: "I've got a lot of messages for Pete, but the guy who needs a message is (Seahawks owner and Microsoft co-founder) Paul Allen. You should have done more reconnaissance on (Carroll). He's a good football coach, but he's an Apple guy. I know for a fact he's got at least one iPhone, multiple iPods, two MacBook Pros and an iPad. I'm just saying, Paul, FYI."
Week 15 DEC 19	Falcons	Trojans reunion: OT Sam Baker Message for Pete: BAKER SAYS: "It was just a great experience to play (for you) so close to home. Everything you said you were going to do, you set out and we did it."
Week 16 DEC 26	Buccaneers	Trojans reunion: DL Kyle Moore Message for Pete: MOORE SAYS: "Bang! Bang! Bang! I will see you on the other side of the field. He'll know what I'm talking about."

— Dennis Dillon, NFL correspondents

TATE: TED S. WARREN/AP

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QUARTERBACK

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FOLLOW YOUR SPORTS

By Fantasy Source editors Bill Bender, Matt Lutovsky, Brad Pinkerton and George Winkler

- 1. Chris Johnson**, RB, Titans. The effects of last season's heavy workload might be the only thing that slows CJ2K in 2010. He's still a surefire No. 1 overall pick after racking up 2,006 rushing yards last year.
- 2. Adrian Peterson**, RB, Vikings. Despite career lows in yards per carry (4.4) and yards per game (86.4) last season, Peterson set a personal best with 18 touchdowns. He's a no-brainer with Johnson off the board.
- 3. Maurice Jones-Drew**, RB, Jaguars. MJD excelled in his first season as Jacksonville's feature back, and with little competition for carries there's no reason to think he won't be dominant again.
- 4. Ray Rice**, RB, Ravens. Only TD vulture Willis McGahee is keeping the versatile Rice from being a top three pick. In leagues that award a point per reception, a strong argument can be made for moving him up.
- 5. Michael Turner**, RB, Falcons. Turner was on pace for about 1,500 rushing yards and 18 TDs before an ankle injury ruined his '09 season in Week 10. He's 100 percent now and could be a great value pick.
- 6. Frank Gore**, RB, 49ers. Gore is the man in San Fran, which makes him a rare feature back in a league overrun with committee backfields. He averaged 109.0 total yards per game last year.
- 7. Steven Jackson**, RB, Rams. The last of the elite feature backs, Jackson must overcome injuries and awful play around him. But he is talented enough to get past both issues.
- 8. Drew Brees**, QB, Saints. If you're OK with paying a premium for an elite quarterback, Brees is your man. He has averaged 4,574.5 passing yards and 30.5 TDs the past four seasons.
- 9. Andre Johnson**, WR, Texans. When you consider Johnson's talent and role on offense, he's clearly the top wide receiver on the board. The Texans love to throw, especially to him, and there's no reason to think that will change in 2010.
- 10. DeAngelo Williams**, RB, Panthers. The emergence of Jonathan Stewart last season will drive down Williams' stock, but the two proved they could coexist profitably in '08 and '09. The Panthers are still a run-centric team with enough touches to go around.

Mr. 2,000 tops the SN 200

Titans running back Chris Johnson has it in for the NFL record book

Scoring binge

A look at how many touchdowns SN's top five running backs scored each of the past two seasons—and how many they will score this season:



*Fantasy Source projection

11. Aaron Rodgers, QB, Packers. Rodgers' 8,472 passing yards and 67 total TDs the past two seasons mean you'll have to spend a first-round pick to get him. He's worth it.

12. Rashard Mendenhall, RB, Steelers. He was good—not great—after taking over the starting job in '09. But the fact he's the unquestioned workhorse in Pittsburgh makes him a borderline first-round pick.

13. Randy Moss, WR, Patriots. Don't be fooled into thinking Moss, 33, is declining with age. He racked up 1,264 yards and 13 TDs in arguably one of his five best seasons last year.

14. Peyton Manning, QB, Colts. He's 34, but Manning is still the best bet in the league to reach 4,000 passing yards and 30 TDs. He has hit 4,000 yards 10 times and 30 TDs five times.

15. Ryan Grant, RB, Packers. He is the working man's pick. Grant is prone to slow starts but has rushed for 1,007 yards and 10 TDs in December from 2007-09. He also has little competition in Green Bay.

16. Shonn Greene, RB, Jets. He offered a glimpse of potential fantasy greatness in the playoffs last season, and Greene would be a first-round pick if not for the presence of LaDainian Tomlinson.

17. Miles Austin, WR, Cowboys. Last year's out-of-nowhere player emerged as Tony Romo's big-play guy. Austin's career per-catch average is 16.9 yards.

18. Larry Fitzgerald, WR, Cardinals. Owners worry about Arizona's switch to Matt Leinart at quarterback, but Fitzgerald remains a sneaky-good pick who could fall to the third round. Don't let that happen.

19. Reggie Wayne, WR, Colts. He isn't the most glamorous receiver, but Wayne is one of the most trustworthy. He's one of only two receivers with six straight 1,000-yard seasons.

20. Cedric Benson, RB, Bengals. He found new life in Cincinnati last

season while topping 1,000 rushing yards for the first time. The Bengals morphed into a running team, and Benson was one of the few workhorse backs in the league. But we are leaving Benson out of the first round for now, figuring he still needs to prove '09 wasn't a fluke.

21. Philip Rivers, QB, Chargers. Losing Vincent Jackson for three games hurts, but Rivers remains a top five quarterback. He's one of four quarterbacks with 4,000 passing yards in each of the past two seasons.

22. DeSean Jackson, WR, Eagles. He is the best big-play receiver in the game, with eight TDs of 40 or more yards in '09. Don't expect the Eagles' quarterback change to affect Jackson: He had 250 receiving yards and two TDs in Kevin Kolb's two starts.

23. Calvin Johnson, WR, Lions. He is a wonderful bounceback candidate, especially if quarterback Matthew Stafford stays healthy. Four of Johnson's five TD receptions in '09 came from Stafford.

24. Joseph Addai, RB, Colts. Chronically undervalued, Addai is one of five running backs with 40 or more TDs since 2006. Don't let him slide past Round 3 as your second back.

25. Tom Brady, QB, Patriots. He enjoyed a solid comeback season after a torn ACL in '08, but he has thrown more than 30 TD passes only once. He's the riskiest of our top five quarterbacks.

26. Jonathan Stewart, RB, Panthers. He is the first second-string running back to make our list, but that's a tribute to the Panthers' strong rushing attack. Stewart arguably has more goal-line value and upside than teammate DeAngelo Williams.

27. Beanie Wells, RB, Cardinals. The Cardinals will try to run a more balanced offense now that Kurt Warner has retired and Matt Leinart

has taken over at quarterback. The shift in philosophy should help Wells build on a solid rookie season.

28. Tony Romo, QB, Cowboys. He threw for a career-high 4,483 yards last season and finally won a playoff game. Now that he has found a replacement for Terrell Owens in Miles Austin, all is well in Big D.

29. Knowshon Moreno, RB, Broncos. He is an excellent two-way threat who has the ability to hit double-digit rushing TDs in Year 2. But a hamstring injury suffered in camp makes him iffy for Week 1.

30. Brandon Marshall, WR, Dolphins. He has been full-go in training camp following offseason hip surgery, and his trade from Denver to Miami won't change his value. Marshall remains a No. 1 fantasy receiver.

31. Jamaal Charles, RB, Chiefs. He rushed for 658 yards and four TDs in Kansas City's last four games of '09, but the Chiefs' addition of Thomas Jones will make playing time an issue.

32. Roddy White, WR, Falcons. Despite racking up three straight 1,000-yard seasons and scoring a career-high 11 touchdowns in 2009, White continues to be undervalued in fantasy drafts. Grab this bargain if he's available.

33. Matt Schaub, QB, Texans. Last season, he finally stayed healthy and vaulted into the upper echelon of fantasy quarterbacks. He led the NFL with 4,770 passing yards, and because of the Texans' unsettled backfield, he'll probably throw just as much this year.

34. LeSean McCoy, RB, Eagles. Philadelphia is finished with Brian Westbrook, so it's up to McCoy to prove he can get the job done. To stay on the field, he'll need to improve in pass protection. If he does, McCoy is set up for a breakthrough year.

35. Matt Forte, RB, Bears. He will have to share touches with Chester

Taylor, but new offensive coordinator Mike Martz should be able to take full advantage of Forte's strength as a receiver out of the backfield.

36. Marques Colston, WR, Saints. Playing in New Orleans' pass-heavy offense is both a blessing and a curse because Drew Brees spreads the ball to so many different receivers. But Colston is still the top guy and is coming off his third 1,000-yard season in the past four years.

37. Felix Jones, RB, Cowboys. Dallas has hyped Jones during the offseason, indicating he will surpass Marion Barber in importance in the Cowboys' backfield. But we've heard this talk before, so now it's time for Jones to prove he can stay healthy and deliver.

38. Pierre Thomas, RB, Saints. Durability is a concern with Thomas, but his role in New Orleans' high-octane offense makes him a good bet for nice total yardage numbers.

39. Greg Jennings, WR, Packers. Owners were frustrated by Jennings' four TDs last year, but remember that he had 21 combined in '07 and '08. He's a home run threat on every play.

40. Brandon Jacobs, RB, Giants. He's a cold product after a dismal '09, but his track record suggests that if he can stay healthy, he can produce at a high level. Expect improvement across the board.

41. Steve Smith, WR, Giants. Smith emerged from the Giants' logjam at receiver and became Eli Manning's go-to guy. There's no reason to expect that to change this year.

42. Ronnie Brown, RB, Dolphins. He always produces when healthy, but knee and foot injuries have plagued Brown the past couple years. At least you know he'll get plenty of touches in the Dolphins' run-first scheme.

43. Ryan Mathews, RB, Chargers. It's easy to get excited about a primary ballcarrier in a high-powered offense, but the Chargers' unstable line and

Mathews' inexperience are reasons for caution.

44. Brett Favre, QB, Vikings. Sure, the 40-year-old has to be considered an injury risk, especially after offseason ankle surgery—not to mention a retirement risk. But if he plays, he'll produce.

45. Dallas Clark, TE, Colts. He enjoyed the finest season of his career in '09 and became the "glorified WR" fantasy owners love to draft at tight end. Elite production is almost a given.

46. Antonio Gates, TE, Chargers. His career-high 1,157 receiving yards last year led all tight ends. Better numbers are possible this season with teammate Vincent Jackson suspended for the first three games.

47. Chad Ochocinco, WR, Bengals. He spent his offseason in front of reality TV cameras, so his owners have to hope he's focused on football.

48. Sidney Rice, WR, Vikings. He is still affected by a hip injury suffered in last season's playoffs. The injury and Brett Favre's status are two things to track in determining whether Rice can build on his breakout '09 season.

49. Anquan Boldin, WR, Ravens. Can Boldin function at a high level without Larry Fitzgerald drawing double-teams? We think he can—as long as he can stay healthy.

50. Steve Smith, WR, Panthers. He is on track to return in Week 1 after fracturing his arm in an offseason flag football game. That makes Carolina's No. 1 wide receiver a potential bargain in fantasy leagues.

TIPS FROM THE PROS

Vikings CB CEDRIC GRIFFIN says ...



➔ Look out for **Jermichael Finley**. "I'm counting on him to have a big year with Green Bay. He is a tight end

with wideout speed. He's physical, strong, can high-point the ball and—as players would say—he has that dog in him."

Texans S BERNARD POLLARD says ...



➔ Don't forget about **Houston's other receiver**. "I know we have **Andre Johnson**—wow—but **Kevin Walter** has been

an animal this offseason and is ready for whatever corner who wants to pick a fight with him."

Saints FB HEATH EVANS says ...



➔ Remember the name **Lance Moore**. "He had a huge 2008 (79 catches, 10 TDs) and is healed and hungry

after a lackluster, injury-plagued '09. He'll probably be the Saints' second-leading receiver ... behind the starting fullback."

Ravens LB TERRELL SUGGS says ...



➔ Draft **Ravens WR Anquan Boldin**. "Watch out for **Anquan**. He is hungry right now and anxious to get

back to the Pro Bowl."

Giants WR STEVE SMITH says ...



➔ Pick up **Eli Manning's top two targets**. "Look out for **Hakeem Nicks** this year. He's a big play waiting

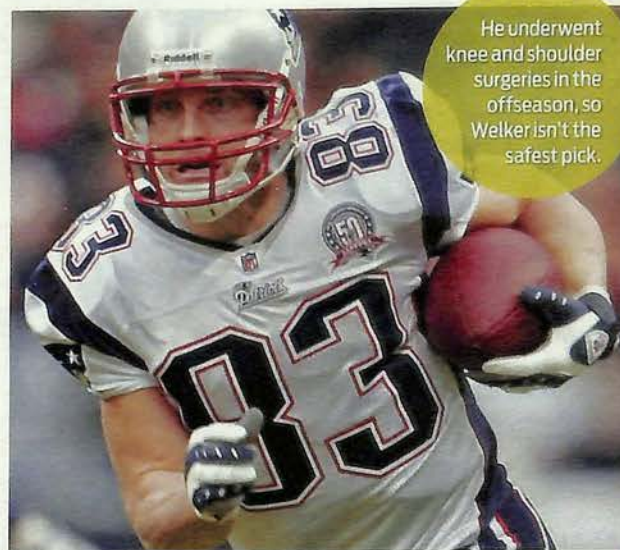
to happen, and he knows how to get those yards after the catch. And the wide receiver playing across from him isn't too bad, either."

51. Jerome Harrison, RB, Browns
52. Percy Harvin, WR, Vikings
53. Dwayne Bowe, WR, Chiefs
54. Marion Barber, RB, Cowboys
55. Vernon Davis, TE, 49ers
56. Jason Witten, TE, Cowboys
57. Pierre Garcon, WR, Colts
58. Eli Manning, QB, Giants
59. Laurence Maroney, RB, Patriots
60. Jay Cutler, QB, Bears
61. Joe Flacco, QB, Ravens
62. Vincent Jackson, WR, Chargers
63. Brent Celek, TE, Eagles
64. Tony Gonzalez, TE, Falcons
65. Fred Jackson, RB, Bills
66. Clinton Portis, RB, Redskins
67. Michael Crabtree, WR, 49ers
68. Jeremy Maclin, WR, Eagles
69. Santana Moss, WR, Redskins
70. Darren McFadden, RB, Raiders
71. Matt Ryan, QB, Falcons
72. Donovan McNabb, QB, Redskins
73. Jahvid Best, RB, Lions
74. Owen Daniels, TE, Texans
75. Jermichael Finley, TE, Packers
76. Carnell Williams, RB, Buccaneers
77. Justin Forsett, RB, Seahawks
78. Terrell Owens, WR, Bengals
79. Mike Wallace, WR, Steelers
80. Hakeem Nicks, WR, Giants
81. Ahmad Bradshaw, RB, Giants
82. Donald Brown, RB, Colts
83. Mike Sims-Walker, WR, Jaguars
84. Ricky Williams, RB, Dolphins
85. Ben Tate, RB, Texans
86. Kevin Kolb, QB, Eagles
87. Derrick Mason, WR, Ravens
88. Donald Driver, WR, Packers
89. Wes Welker, WR, Patriots
90. Kellen Winslow, TE, Buccaneers
91. Ben Roethlisberger, QB, Steelers
92. Reggie Bush, RB, Saints
93. C.J. Spiller, RB, Bills
94. LaDainian Tomlinson, RB, Jets
95. Darren Sproles, RB, Chargers
96. Lee Evans, WR, Bills
97. Malcom Floyd, WR, Chargers
98. Chris Chambers, WR, Chiefs
99. Heath Miller, TE, Steelers
100. Antonio Holmes, WR, Jets
101. Dez Bryant, WR, Cowboys

102. Steve Breaston, WR, Cardinals
103. Robert Meachem, WR, Saints
104. Eagles defense
105. Jets defense
106. Johnny Knox, WR, Bears
107. Alex Smith, QB, 49ers
108. Kenny Britt, WR, Titans
109. Carson Palmer, QB, Bengals
110. Chester Taylor, RB, Bears
111. Julian Edelman, WR, Patriots
112. John Carlson, TE, Seahawks
113. Visanthe Shiancoe, TE, Vikings
114. Arian Foster, RB, Texans
115. T.J. Houshmandzadeh, WR, Seahawks
116. Packers defense
117. Ravens defense
118. Tim Hightower, RB, Cardinals
119. Toby Gerhart, RB, Vikings
120. Chris Cooley, TE, Redskins
121. Mohamed Massaquoi, WR, Browns
122. Bears defense
123. Mike Bell, RB, Eagles
124. Devin Hester, WR, Bears
125. Braylon Edwards, WR, Jets
126. Michael Bush, RB, Raiders
127. Willis McGahee, RB, Ravens
128. Hines Ward, WR, Steelers
129. Steve Slaton, RB, Texans
130. Montario Hardesty, RB, Browns
131. David Garrard, QB, Jaguars
132. Saints defense
133. Steelers defense
134. Vince Young, QB, Titans
135. Chad Henne, QB, Dolphins
136. Bernard Scott, RB, Bengals
137. Kevin Smith, RB, Lions
138. Vikings defense
139. 49ers defense
140. Roy Williams, WR, Cowboys
141. Devery Henderson, WR, Saints
142. Austin Collie, WR, Colts
143. Kevin Walter, WR, Texans
144. Joshua Cribbs, WR, Browns
145. Sammy Morris, RB, Patriots
146. Matthew Stafford, QB, Lions
147. Titans defense
148. Nate Burleson, WR, Lions
149. Devin Aromashodu, WR, Bears
150. Matt Hasselbeck, QB, Seahawks

151. Colts defense
152. Zach Miller, TE, Raiders
153. Jason Snelling, RB, Falcons
154. Giants defense
155. Nate Washington, WR, Titans
156. Josh Morgan, WR, 49ers
157. Leon Washington, RB, Seahawks
158. Matt Cassel, QB, Chiefs
159. Kyle Orton, QB, Broncos
160. Devin Thomas, WR, Redskins
161. Golden Tate, WR, Seahawks
162. Thomas Jones, RB, Chiefs
163. Derrick Ward, RB, Buccaneers
164. Willie Parker, RB, Redskins
165. Greg Olsen, TE, Bears
166. Cowboys defense
167. Jabar Gaffney, WR, Broncos
168. Mario Manningham, WR, Giants
169. Jericho Cotchery, WR, Jets
170. Javon Ringer, RB, Titans
171. Marshawn Lynch, RB, Bills
172. Larry Johnson, RB, Redskins
173. Jonathan Dwyer, RB, Steelers
174. Kevin Boss, TE, Giants
175. Dustin Keller, TE, Jets
176. Tashard Choice, RB, Cowboys
177. Demaryius Thomas, WR, Broncos
178. Jason Campbell, QB, Raiders
179. Davone Bess, WR, Dolphins
180. Donnie Avery, WR, Rams
181. Arrelious Benn, WR, Buccaneers
182. Jeremy Shockey, TE, Saints
183. Bills defense
184. Bengals defense
185. Josh Freeman, QB, Buccaneers
186. Mark Sanchez, QB, Jets
187. Matt Leinart, QB, Cardinals
188. Rob Bironas, K, Titans
189. Nate Kaeding, K, Chargers
190. Mason Crosby, K, Packers
191. Stephen Gostkowski, K, Patriots
192. David Akers, K, Eagles
193. Ryan Longwell, K, Vikings
194. Dan Carpenter, K, Dolphins
195. Robbie Gould, K, Bears
196. Lawrence Tynes, K, Giants
197. Garrett Hartley, K, Saints
198. Kris Brown, K, Texans
199. Joe Nedney, K, 49ers
200. Antonio Bryant, WR, Bengals

HIGH-5s



BOUNCE-BACK CANDIDATES

1. Michael Turner, RB, Falcons
2. Brandon Jacobs, RB, Giants
3. Calvin Johnson, WR, Lions
4. Dwayne Bowe, WR, Chiefs
5. Chris Cooley, TE, Redskins

IMPACT ROOKIES

1. Ryan Mathews, RB, Chargers
2. Jahvid Best, RB, Lions
3. Ben Tate, RB, Texans
4. C.J. Spiller, RB, Bills
5. Dez Bryant, WR, Cowboys

RISKY PICKS

1. Wes Welker, WR, Patriots
2. Vincent Jackson, WR, Chargers
3. Ronnie Brown, RB, Dolphins
4. Sidney Rice, WR, Vikings
5. Brett Favre, QB, Vikings

BREAKOUT PLAYERS

1. Shonn Greene, RB, Jets
2. Felix Jones, RB, Cowboys
3. Joe Flacco, QB, Ravens
4. Malcom Floyd, WR, Chargers
5. Johnny Knox, WR, Bears

SN

TIPS FROM THE PROS

Giants WR HAKEEM NICKS says ...



► **Texans RB Ben Tate will pile up points.** "He's a sleeper for running backs from this year's draft. Look for him to lead Houston in rushing touchdowns."

Steelers LB LAMARR WOODLEY says ...

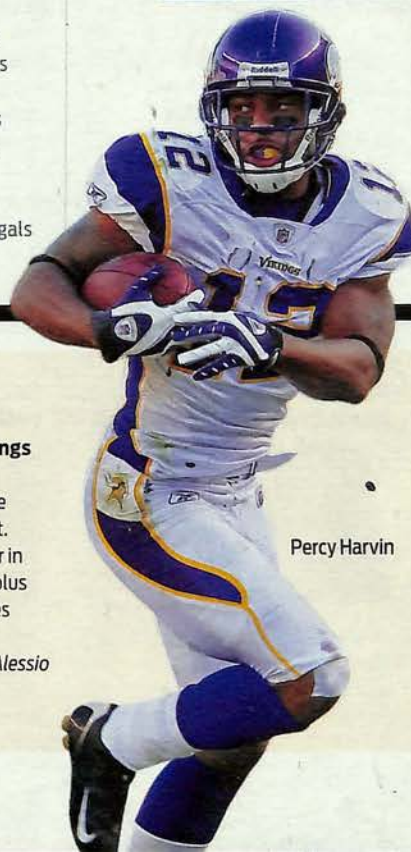


► **Out with Boldin, in with Breaston.** "Steve Breaston is going to have a breakout year in Arizona with Anquan Boldin gone. People don't realize just how explosive he is when he gets the ball in his hands."

Vikings LB BEN LEBER says ...



► **Take Vikings WR Percy Harvin.** "The kid is a beast. Another year in the system plus more touches equals monster points."
—Jeff D'Alessio



Percy Harvin

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THERE'S NO KNOCKING **KNOCKS**

The first five coaches who invited HBO into their camps have few regrets



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SN'S PANEL



Brian Billick
'01 Ravens



Dave Campo
'02 Cowboys



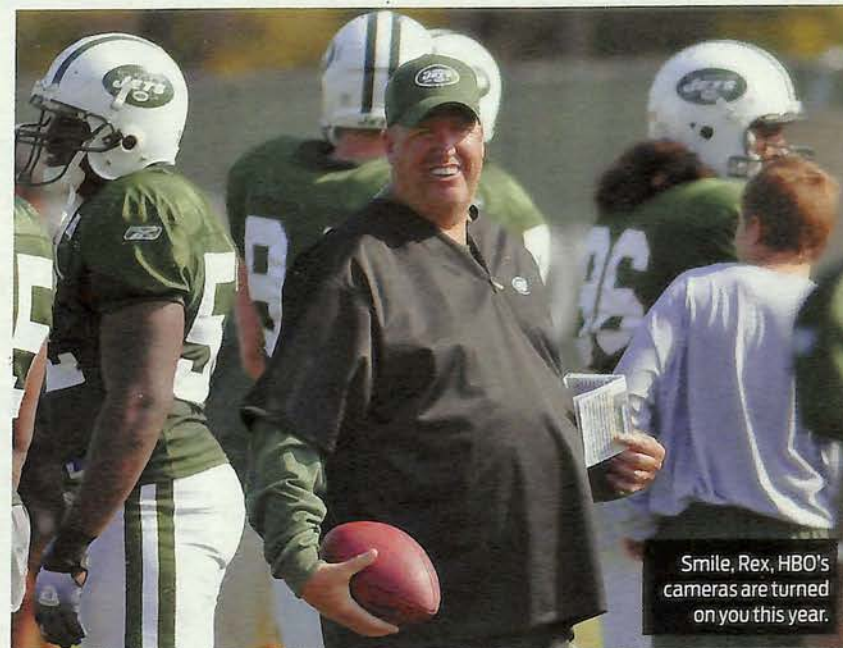
Herman Edwards
'07 Chiefs



Wade Phillips
'08 Cowboys



Marvin Lewis
'09 Bengals



Smile, Rex, HBO's cameras are turned on you this year.

Here comes Rex Ryan, large and in charge and ready to star in *Hard Knocks*, the sports documentary series produced by NFL Films and HBO that will showcase his Jets as they prepare for the 2010 season.

Ryan has an idea of what he's getting into—he was an assistant coach for the '01 Ravens, the first team featured on the show—but SN thought he might like to hear what each of the five head coaches who preceded him thought about the experience.

THE THING I LIKED MOST

BILICK: "We were a small-market team between D.C. and Baltimore, always fighting for attention. I think it did bring attention to us, even after the Super Bowl year. I think people had a certain view of the personalities and characters on our team... and I thought it was a way for people to see that they were good guys."

CAMPO: "It raised the intensity in practice sometimes because they knew that practice was eventually going to be on national TV."

EDWARDS: "It gives fans the ability to go behind the curtain and really see the process of how you try to build a football team and all the hours that coaches and players put in to try to do something special for that season."

PHILLIPS: "The players knew they had to be on their toes all the time. Someone—in addition to the coaches and fans—was always watching."

LEWIS: "We have a high level of trust with the professionalism of NFL Films and HBO, and their presence on a daily basis brought a heightened sense of excitement and intensity to the jobs we all were doing in getting ready for the season."

THE THING I LIKED LEAST

BILICK: "Well, you do worry about the intrusiveness and if the players start focusing

more on that than the task at hand. ... But it was really not bad at all."

CAMPO: "Occasionally, a player might be singled out for his struggles on the field. You never wanted to see a player get embarrassed when he's out there trying to win a job."

EDWARDS: "The thing that bothers me a little bit is when a kid gets cut. They actually show that on television. I really don't like that part of it because I don't think any job in America where you stand in front of a camera and you're getting told you're not employed anymore is a good thing."

PHILLIPS: "I really had no problems with it."

LEWIS: "Not really having control of all the story lines. You have to give that up to some extent, and sometimes it's a little uncomfortable. But it's part of the whole deal you buy into."

WHAT I CHANGED BECAUSE THE CAMERAS WERE ROLLING

BILICK: "I'm sure, to a certain degree, some players were a little more guarded. Or maybe you weren't as frank at some of the meetings."

CAMPO: "My colorful use of language. My wife counted every swear word. By the second week, I had to catch myself almost every time I was ready to spit out a bad word."

EDWARDS: "Nothing. You can look at it before they actually put it on tape, so you have the ability to censor it."

PHILLIPS: "Nothing. There was a trust element involved with HBO and NFL Films, so it was business as usual."

LEWIS: "Sometimes you had to postpone private conversations you wanted to have with various people, waiting for the opportunity to do it when you weren't wearing a mike or could otherwise be overheard."

— Dennis Dillon

Behind the camera



HBO Sports president Ross Greenburg's views of *Hard Knocks*, set to begin its sixth season August 11:

➔ **On the *Hard Knocks* name:** "It's catchy, and it works. It plays off not only the intensity of the preseason but also the tough luck of rookies trying to make a football team and getting cut. It works on a variety of levels."

➔ **Three things he looks for in selecting a team:** "The personalities of the coaches and players. The national interest in the franchise. And the franchise's ability to allow us

to do our jobs and create a transparency."

➔ **Favorite season:** 2001, with the Ravens. "Our coming-out party. There's nothing like a first show, and it just came out of the box with such a bang."

➔ **Best production:** 2009, with the Bengals. "(NFL Films president) Steve Sabol and I walked away from that and said we couldn't have done any better in terms of production quality."

➔ **Favorite coach:** Brian Billick. "He wins the Oscar for best coach so far. But I think Rex Ryan could be right there this year."

➔ **Favorite player:** Chad Ochocinco. "He surprised a lot of people because he was so endearing. When he walked into a room, there was kind of

this glow around him. He had a tremendous personality and sense of humor that I don't think people realized existed."

➔ **The one thing he wished hadn't ended up on the cutting room floor:** "Honestly, there's nothing. Because we have a solid hour, there's nothing that was left on the floor that we looked back on and said, 'Wow, I wish we had it in' because we can usually get our best stuff in in one hour. Having said that, when (Chiefs running back) Larry Johnson was holding out, (general manager) Carl Peterson didn't exactly want us in on every negotiation, so I guess you could say a couple of those meetings would have been pretty cool."

— Dennis Dillon

RYAN: KEVIN BOVUL/AP



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'Maybe I can change some opinions and really get the offense going'



As an NBA assistant coach for more than two decades, **Tom Thibodeau** has seen everything—he

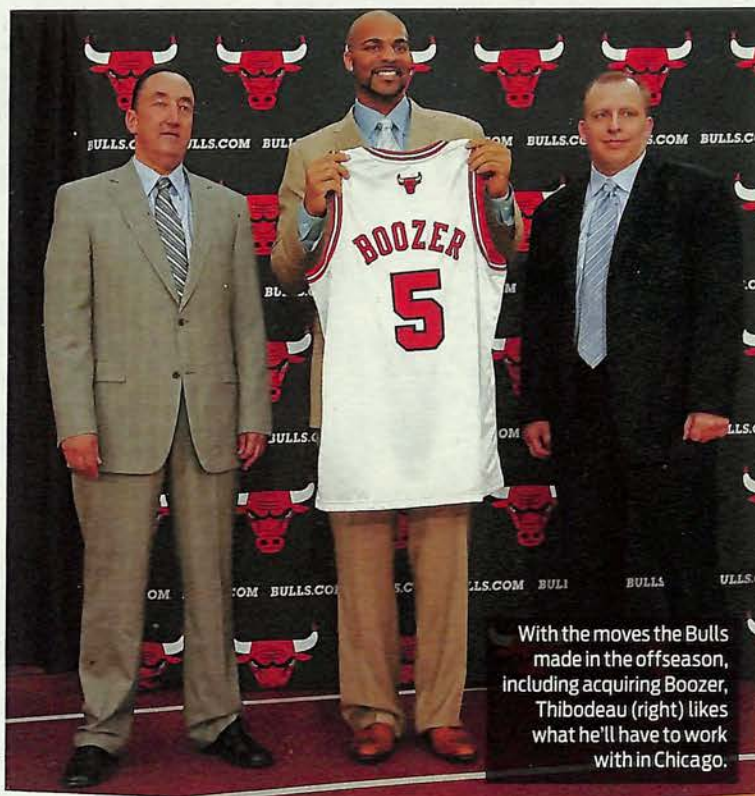
started off with the expansion Timberwolves in 1989, and his most recent gig was helping the Celtics make The Finals twice since joining them in 2007. Now, after forging a reputation as a diligent worker, Thibodeau has his chance as a head coach in Chicago, one of the most active teams on the free-agent market this offseason. He explained for SN why he can't wait to get a start on his first season.

The thing that has me most excited about this job is the good young core that has been here, combined with the pieces the front office was able to bring in to make the team even better. A team that starts with Derrick Rose, Joakim Noah, Taj Gibson, Luol Deng, James Johnson—that is a good young group. But then you add complementary players like Carlos Boozer, Kyle Korver, Ronnie Brewer and C.J. Watson and now you have a well-balanced group.

We're still going to be a team that goes defense first. That is not going to change, but I think we will have more options offensively. The goal is to focus on defense and rebounding and use that to get the ball to Derrick and get into the open court, where our young guys can really shine.

But I think the real difference, offensively, will be in the way we are able to execute in the halfcourt. It starts with Derrick, but he will have Ronnie and Luol, who are both very good slashing scorers who can fill the lane. Carlos is a true pick-and-roll big man, which Derrick hasn't really had. Kyle gives us a stand-still shooting option.

We will be much more versatile, and I am looking forward to taking advantage of that. I know my reputation is that I am a defensive coach, but I think that



With the moves the Bulls made in the offseason, including acquiring Boozer, Thibodeau (right) likes what he'll have to work with in Chicago.

is just because, in the last three years in Boston, we divided duties into defensive coordinator and offensive coordinator. So people put me in a box as far as being a defense-only guy. But, for the other 17 years that I coached, I coached

offense as much as defense. Maybe I can change some opinions and really get the offense going because any really good team—especially in the playoffs—has to have balance on both sides of the ball.

— As told to Sean Deveney

References available upon request

SN asked three Celtics for their opinion of new Bulls coach Tom Thibodeau, who spent the past three seasons as a Boston assistant.



➤ **Kendrick Perkins:** "You're getting a hard worker. Tom Thibodeau is the first guy to the gym and the last to leave. He'll get there every morning at 5, and he'll leave about 8 every night. He loves the game of basketball, he knows the game of basketball, and he's going to demand your best. I think he's a great guy for that job."



➤ **Kevin Garnett:** "He is a guy who loves his job. I think it is probably overdue that he gets a head coaching job because he knows the game of basketball and loves the game of basketball and has a passion. I don't think there are many people who really like just watching film as much as Thibs. At the same time, we will miss him next year."



➤ **Ray Allen:** "I appreciate his consistency and his discipline. (The Bulls) always have been a pretty good defensive team, so he's going to be good for them in that respect. He can definitely help them to get better. He is a guy who knows his stuff, knows what his plan is and knows how to communicate it to you."

— Sean Deveney

Scouts' Views: Which coaches are the right fit?

Six teams dumped coaches this offseason, and their replacements are an eclectic group—three longtime assistants, two recently fired head coaches and one guy coming out of the broadcast booth. There's no telling how the new hires will pan out, but one NBA scout ranked how well each coach's strengths match his roster and situation.

1. Tom Thibodeau, Bulls. "Going back to Scott Skiles, this team has been built on a defense-first philosophy, and I don't think that will change with Thibodeau. They will be very comfortable with him, and if he can open up the offense, they are going to be a very improved team."



2. Byron Scott, Cavaliers. "This is probably a team in need of a rah-rah kind of coach. Byron can do that—he is a good motivator. The actual strategy might come more from the assistants, but Byron is going to want this team to run and that might suit the roster nicely."

3. Larry Drew, Hawks. "Mike Woodson was a really good coach, but with Larry, I don't think they're going to miss a beat. He has been there, and he knows the system—especially the switching defense they run. I would expect them to be similar to what Woodson was doing."

4. Doug Collins, 76ers. "The challenge is going to be communicating with today's players. The roster is a little tough to work with, but when it comes to X's and O's, Doug Collins is right up there. I just don't know that he can get young players to take his X's and O's and make them work on the court."

5. Monty Williams, Hornets. "It will be interesting to see what kind of style Williams brings, if he will be a lot like Nate McMillan in Portland, where they slowed it down a lot. Williams will have to be willing to give the ball to Chris Paul and let him run."

6. Vinny Del Negro, Clippers. "If there is one thing you could criticize about Del Negro in Chicago, it was that he didn't let Derrick Rose get out and run enough. And that's what Baron Davis is going to want to do. Vinny's offense sets up a lot of midrange shooting, and that's not the strength of this team."

— Sean Deveney

Pressure check: Does your team want to win or need to win?

By Craig Custance
ccustance@sportingnews.com

Every team heads into training camp with the goal of making the playoffs. Every team dreams about winning the Stanley Cup. But with actual expectations come pressure, which varies from franchise to franchise. Where the gauge sits for four contenders:

VERY HIGH CAPITALS

Give Washington coach Bruce Boudreau credit. He's already trying to ease the pressure his Capitals will face as they look to bounce back from their disappointing first-round playoff exit. "I don't feel pressure at all," Boudreau says. "Our core is getting better, not getting worse. The younger guys have not reached their so-called prime. I would hope that trend continues. It's our goal to win the Cup. I think it's everybody's goal."

But not everybody has a fan base that expects, at a minimum, a trip to the Cup finals. Forward Brooks Laich says high expectations have always existed inside the team's dressing room. "We feel the pressure to win the Stanley Cup," he says.

HIGH DEVILS

If there was any question how badly the New Jersey ownership wants to win and fill Prudential Center, it was answered with the push to sign Ilya Kovalchuk. But the Kovalchuk story has overshadowed the fantastic free-agent additions of two defensemen—Anton Volchenkov and Henrik Tallinder.

"They are two veterans who play the game hard, play the game the right way and move the puck," new coach John MacLean says. "Volchenkov brings a different element with his grittiness and getting in front of the puck. Tallinder is a smooth-skating guy who is going to help us out overall."

Couple the free-agent spending with the closing window of goalie Martin Brodeur's outstanding career and the time is now for New Jersey.



Alex Ovechkin's Capitals and Thornton's Sharks are at opposite ends of the pressure gauge.

INCREASING BLUES

It's time for St. Louis' young talent to produce some positive results. And the players are the first to admit it.

"We've had enough of rebuilding, rebuilding. We've got higher expectations than another season like (last year)," forward David Backes says. "The pieces to the puzzle are there. It's time."

If Davis Payne can get this team into the playoffs in his first full season as coach, he will have a goalie in Jaroslav Halak who has already proved he knows how to win in

the postseason. Capitals general manager George McPhee, whose team was eliminated by Halak and the Canadiens last spring, is relieved the young goalie was traded to the Blues—and out of the Eastern Conference.

"I don't mind that he went over there," McPhee says.

NOT AS HIGH AS YOU'D THINK SHARKS

This team shot down the theory it can't win in the playoffs by advancing to the Western Conference finals last

spring. So that pressure is gone. Plus, G.M. Doug Wilson points out a detail many fans overlook.

"We've actually got a pretty young team. Our team is younger than Phoenix," he says. Younger players such as Joe Pavelski (26), Devin Setoguchi (23) and Marc-Edouard Vlasic (23) provide the necessary energy to complement the Sharks' veteran core.

"The beauty of it is (Patrick) Marleau and (Joe) Thornton are just coming into their prime," Wilson says. "Plus, (34-year-old) Dan Boyle would be a youngster on Detroit's defense."

Behind the Mask Dan Ellis, Lightning



three seasons with the Predators, he picked the Lightning over four or five other teams.

On how he became a goalie: "I started playing hockey around 2 or 3, and it was everybody rotating in as goalie. I liked the equipment, and that was the (biggest) reason

Dan Ellis was an oddity on the free-agent market: a goalie with plenty of options. After

I got into the position. It's still my favorite thing to this day. I enjoy creating the different-looking stuff, the mask—I've always enjoyed that part of the game."

On plans for a new mask: "I'm working with my designer in Sweden. The cool thing about Tampa is they're letting me do two masks. One is going to be with a couple of gods—Thor, the thunder god, and Zeus on the other side throwing lightning bolts around. The other mask will be a little more of an ocean theme with Poseidon, the god of the ocean."

On the goalies he patterned his game after: "I try to pick little bits and pieces from different goalies. I watched Ed Belfour a lot, his very simple positional game—butterfly most times but not every time, and he played the puck well. Same with Patrick Roy. He was a butterfly guy. Grant Fuhr was my idol growing up, but I don't think you can do jump-kick saves anymore."

On his superstitions: "I had a lot in college but found that superstitions are out of your control. If you falter on a

superstition—if that's going to determine a good game or bad game—you've let something out of your of control taint mental preparation."

On the player he fears most on a breakaway: "Pavel Datsyuk (Red Wings). He has so many moves, you don't know what he's going to do half the time. You have to be patient, wait him out. He's a guy who can pull the puck, toe drag it at the last second, and you think you've got him and he pulls out one more move."

—Craig Custance

UNDER THE HELMET

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT ME

By **CHIP GANASSI**, team owner and winner of the 2010 Daytona 500, Indianapolis 500 and Brickyard 400



1

1. My childhood heroes? Certainly Mario Andretti. But then—you're going to think this is crazy—but it was also Evel Knievel. I can remember my mother saying to me, "We've got to watch TV; Evel Knievel's going to be on."

2. I was the first guy to be a partner of Kevin McClatchy in ownership of the Pirates. We've since gotten out of the Pirates, but it was a nice experience while I was in it. It was instrumental in keeping that team based in Pittsburgh.

3. I don't have a preference for open-wheel or stock car racing. I like the action of the races, kind of like the guy in Vegas who just likes gambling—it doesn't matter if it's the tables or the ponies. I like all aspects of the action of racing.

4. The top of my bucket list off the track: I want to go on a sailboat some time for a month. I've always just thought about that. I think that would be fun.

5. When I was 5 years old, my father paved a go-kart track, and the guy didn't pay for it. So, we ended up having three go-karts,

and I just remember dreaming about driving those things. I was too small to drive them, but I dreamed about it for a long time.

6. I like to ski in the wintertime. I like to swim in the summer. And I ride dirt bikes and snowmobiles.

7. Since I started my racing team from my parents' garage, there isn't a job on the team I haven't done. I think my management style is ... I wouldn't ask anybody to do something I haven't done already. I like to think that I'm a hands-on owner.

8. Coming from Pittsburgh, who wasn't a fan of Terry Bradshaw and Franco Harris and Lynn Swann? Rocky Bleier—you grew up with those guys. But I'm probably just as much a fan of Art Rooney. I remember I was in a crash one time at Michigan. I woke up in the hospital, and one of the first cards I opened with flowers was from Art Rooney. I thought, "Boy, I didn't even know he knew I raced."

—As told to Reid Spencer



8

Should Cup drivers be eligible for Nationwide titles?

NASCAR is considering a rule change that would make full-time Cup drivers ineligible for the Nationwide title. Three former Nationwide champions, who won while doing double duty, shared their thoughts with SN on the possible move.

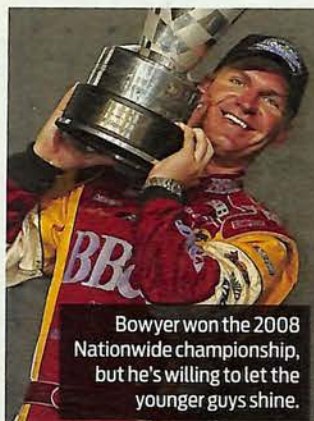
◉ **Carl Edwards:** "The changes really only affect a couple of people. For me personally, it would be disappointing. I understand what NASCAR is trying to do, but I hope they don't change it and find out it doesn't have the desired effect."

◉ **Kevin Harvick:** "There definitely needs to be a place for the younger guys to establish themselves as a Cup-

quality driver. You also have to look at the balances. If somebody is winning the Nationwide championship—who is a 15th-place car, is that really credible as far as being a championship-winning team?"

◉ **Clint Bowyer:** "Having Cup drivers in the series is definitely a good thing. I don't think you can survive without them. I think that's what attracts the fans, the attention, the sponsors. But at the end of the day, that series is a support series. I don't mind backing it down and not letting (Cup drivers) race all those races. I think those kids need a little time in the sun—a little bit more than they're probably seeing."

—Reid Spencer



Bowyer won the 2008 Nationwide championship, but he's willing to let the younger guys shine.

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Is fixing a season as simple as changing chiefs?

Crew chief changes are a common occurrence in the Sprint Cup garage. Matt Kenseth, for instance, has had three pit bosses this year alone. Three former champion crew chiefs explained for SN why a switch seems to jump-start a team's performance.

JEFF HAMMOND



Won titles with Darrell Waltrip in 1982 and '85

"A lot of times, when a crew chief comes in, he has a motivational impact on the team, a little different philosophy. And sometimes a team that was wanting or needing a change will make a little extra effort. Usually, it's the driver looking for something he couldn't find that's responsible for the change. Drivers are the ones who make this happen more times than not."

ANDY PETREE



Won titles with Dale Earnhardt in 1993 and '94

"Everybody's motivated. You make these changes because things are not going well and the two parties have lost confidence in each other. You're not getting 100



Jimmy Fennig (left) is the third crew chief Kenseth has tried to get his message across to this season.

percent effort out of (the driver or crew chief) because of that loss of confidence. When you make that crew chief change, there's instant motivation to have success, so you get the best out of both of them and you'll see an instant bump in performance. But to make it live on, you really have to have a trust factor going on between the two. And that chemistry is what makes it work long term."

RAY EVERNHAM



Won titles with Jeff Gordon in 1995, '97 and '98

"When you make a change, there's a new

mental attitude and everybody steps it up, whether it's the driver or the crew. People are certainly excited, communication is new, and I think that's got more to do with it than anything. (How you tell) if that change is right is if that success continues. Sometimes success gets started, and then it goes right back to where it was."

— Reid Spencer

Three-wide

Three Sprint Cup crew chiefs—Jimmy Elledge (Reed Sorenson), Greg Erwin (Greg Biffle) and Steve Addington (Kurt Busch)—answer three questions



Jimmy Elledge

Greg Erwin

Steve Addington

SN: What's the best call you've ever made from the pit box?

ELLEDGE: This year's Daytona 500 (with driver Scott Speed), staying out at the end on old tires and anticipating it might not go green to the end. We were able to lead that race (for 12 laps) with everyone else on scanners concerned that we'd be in the way.

ERWIN: Two tires at Pocono (on August 1) because that one worked out so good and we won the race.

ADDINGTON: Pitting early at Richmond (in May 2009, with Kyle Busch) in the race we ended up winning on Kyle's birthday. We pitted off cycle and won the race.

SN: Every crew chief can point to one race that got away. What's yours?

ELLEDGE: The New Hampshire race in July 1999, my first full year as a crew chief (for Kenny Wallace). We made a call to stretch fuel mileage, and we got hung up passing Mike Skinner and ended up losing almost a half straightaway. Jeff Burton, when he pitted, blended right in front of us on the white-flag lap to win the race.

ERWIN: This year's Daytona 500. We wound up coming to the white flag leading, and they wrecked behind us. Because we didn't take the white, they gave us those multiple attempts at a green-white-checker. That would have been a big win.

ADDINGTON: The spring race at Bristol this year. We were leading, and the 48 (Jimmie Johnson) was running second. The Roush cars all took two tires and started in front of us. We beat the 48 off pit road, but the 48 got the outside lane for the restart ... and the 48 ended up beating us.

SN: Which over-the-wall pit crew job would you least like to do?

ELLEDGE: Gas. The cans are too heavy, and that stuff is flammable.

ERWIN: I've carried (tires) before, and I've caught gas before. I've even changed (tires) in a backup role, but I'm just not big enough or strong enough to be a good jackman.

ADDINGTON: Gas man. Handling the fuel and having the chance of the fuel spilling and catching on fire. Fire has always been my biggest fear.

— Reid Spencer

OFF THE TRACK

... with Boris Said



- My first car was ... A Fiat 124 Sport.
- My dream car is ... Robby Gordon's Trophy Truck. The truck he races Baja with is about the coolest man toy I've ever seen in my life.
- My average freeway cruising speed is ... 80.
- When I get a flat I ... Change it, as quick as I can.
- I change my oil every ... 30,000 miles, maybe. I use good oil.
- The last time I got a speeding ticket was ... Seven years ago, at Watkins Glen, and I wasn't even speeding. I passed another car, and the guy was hiding behind a barn, and he pulled me over.

- Hybrids are ... Overrated and overpriced—or good clubs to use out of the rough.
- My No. 1 car tip is ... Pay attention to driving.
- My No. 1 pet peeve with fellow motorists is ... People driving while texting.
- On a scale of 1-10, my road rage rating is ... 1. On the racetrack it's probably a 10, and on the street it's a 1.
- I wouldn't be caught dead in ... I think it's the rental car I'm driving this weekend—a Nissan Cube. It's the funniest-looking car I've ever seen in my life.

— Reid Spencer

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10 things you don't know about me

COREY HART

Brewers All-Star right fielder

1. I tried to dunk in my first varsity basketball game. I was young and I could dunk, but I tried to do too much. The ball hit the rim and I wiped out. It's one of those moments you try to forget.

2. I grew up in Kentucky, but my dad was a die-hard Tennessee fan so I'd get caught in the middle. I probably shouldn't root for both, but I try to be medium. Tennessee always wins head to head for me, though.

3. I've been dealing with the "Sunglasses at Night" Corey Hart thing since I was about 14. It's funny.

4. I have four kids, and the funniest is my little girl. Everything she does, she's comical. She tries to pick on the other ones, and that doesn't work.

3



The faces they all make are great, and now the little guy is starting to do a snort thing.

5. I collect comic books and action figures, which might be a little corny, but it's one of those things that I enjoy. I have one of the original Transformers, one of the last copies of the original.

6. My favorite tattoo has my kids' first initials on a four-leaf clover and my wife's initial in the middle. I got the dreamcatcher that's behind the clover because my daughter had bad dreams. I let them pick a charm that hangs from it, just something for the kids.

7

7. I was a construction worker for my first job. I just picked up stuff on the site, cleaned up while they built the houses. Nothing fun. That wasn't very entertaining.

8. I was at the Super Bowl in Phoenix, the one where the Giants and Patriots played. I was actually on that side of the field, on the 30-yard line right where the catch by David Tyree happened, so that was pretty cool.

9. My three favorite bands are Cage the Elephant, Natty Bumpoe and Eminem. Cage the Elephant, they're from my hometown. Natty Bumpoe is one of my best friends; he's just starting that one up. Eminem's new album is really good; he's always been one of my favorites.

10. The Home Run Derby was more fun than the All-Star Game. My favorite thing was just being there

with the kids. My oldest girl doesn't ever get to be on the field because she's a girl, so she's always jealous of my older guy.

— As told to
Ryan Fagan



8



Don't give the A.L. to the Yankees just yet



Todd Jones

Not since the 2000-01 Yankees has an A.L. team reached consecutive World Series. Three teams that could derail New York's back-to-back pennant push this season:

🔸 **Rays.** Starters David Price and Matt Garza, backed by relievers Joaquin Benoit and Rafael Soriano, can provide six to eight innings of no-contact pitching dominance. Tampa Bay's lineup is strong with Carlos Pena, Evan Longoria and Carl Crawford, and it has the right skipper for postseason success.

🔸 **Rangers.** No longer is this an offense-only squad with unreliable pitching and subpar defense. Sure, the heart of the order features three mutants in Josh Hamilton, Michael Young and Vladimir Guerrero and half the lineup scares the daylights out of opponents. But the pitching staff, which now features Cliff Lee, can keep Texas in the game.

🔸 **Twins.** Minnesota still will lull you to sleep with fundamentals. But in addition to Joe Mauer and Justin Morneau (when healthy), the lineup features professional hitters Orlando Hudson, Denard Span, Michael Cuddyer, Jim Thome and Jason Kubel. The Twins aren't flashy but get the job done. Do me a favor and watch them. I assure you the Yankees' top scouts are.

Todd Jones, a former major league closer, is a regular contributor to *Sporting News*.

BEST IN SHOW



Sporting News asked Twins starter **Scott Baker** to pick five bests in the A.L. Central. The only rule: no teammates.



🔸 **Pitch:** Royals SP **ZACK GREINKE's** slider. "It has a lot of tilt with a lot of velocity."

🔸 **Power hitter:** MIGUEL CABRERA, 1B, Tigers. "When he runs into one, there is no doubt about it."

🔸 **Outfield arm:** SHIN-SOO CHOO, RF, Indians. "Guys know better than to attempt that extra base on him."

🔸 **Basestealer:** JUAN PIERRE, LF, White Sox. "The A.L. leader has been stealing bases for a long time."

🔸 **Glove:** OMAR VIZQUEL, IF, White Sox. "I don't think I'm allowed to say anyone other than Omar. He is in great shape at 43 and can still pick it."

— Jeff D'Alessio

Luis Gonzalez

5-time All-Star outfielder, 2001 World Series hero

It is one of the most famous moments in World Series history. 2001, Game 7, Arizona Diamondbacks vs. New York Yankees. Tie score, bottom of the ninth. One out. Craig Counsell gets hit by a pitch to load the bases. Up comes Luis Gonzalez to face Mariano Rivera, the best postseason closer in history. Gonzalez relived what happened next with *Sporting News*.

Before Counsell got hit by the pitch, I was thinking to myself, *Where do I want to go when he gets a hit so I'll be on the front page of the magazines?* Then he got hit by the pitch and, oh, shoot, now it's my turn.

It was almost like your whole career flashes in front of you. From being a little kid, your parents taking you to little league games, going to high school, going to college, all these things play out in your mind in that little amount of time walking from the on-deck circle to home plate.

I was thinking my wife is probably a nervous wreck in the stands. My mom is probably at home clenching the television praying for me. What are my college coach and my roommates and all those guys thinking? You think of all the different cities you played in, all these people you are associated with in some way or another. You think about: If you don't get the hit, how many people did you let down? If you heard a sonic boom, that was my butt sealing up.

You've got a million things going through your mind. But once you get in the batter's box, it's almost like a calm comes over you.

I fouled the first pitch off. The second pitch, I was able to get just enough of it to loop over Derek Jeter's head, just past the infield and into the outfield. I'm running to first, and I can't believe it. I can't believe it's me



In addition to owning the D-backs' only World Series-winning RBI, Gonzalez is the most decorated hitter in team history. This season, the club made his 20 its first retired number.

in that situation. The first guy I was greeted by was Eddie Rodriguez, our first base coach. Then the whole pile got there. It was total chaos. It was an unbelievable feeling.

When I got to my car, I checked my 800 messages. The first one was from one of my best friends growing up—Yankees first baseman Tino Martinez. He was the first one congratulating me and the team, telling me to cherish it—that you don't know how many you're going to get. He's got, what, 15 rings with the Yankees? I'm like, shoot, it's about time you gave me one.

— As told to Matt Crossman



Wanted: agents of change to clean up collegiate corruption



Acclaimed author John Feinstein's most recent book is *Change-Up: Mystery at the World Series*, the fourth in an award-winning series of young adult mysteries. His blog can be found at Feinsteinonthebrink.com.

Bush got his college glory and his pro money despite ignoring the rules. So what's the incentive for an athlete to ignore an agent?

In the spring of 1981, I was covering an NBA playoff series in Houston when I got a phone call late one Friday night from then-Maryland basketball coach Lefty Driesell.

"I think I may have a problem," he said. "I think Falk may have gotten to Buck."

Driesell was talking about Buck Williams, his star junior center, and David Falk, who was trying to make a name for himself as a basketball agent. The deadline for undergraduate players to file for the NBA draft was midnight on Saturday.

Early the next morning, I called Falk in his Washington office. By rule in those days, he was allowed to talk to NBA teams and report back to an underclassman whether there was interest in him. The line, blurry as always, was supposedly crossed if the agent did any negotiating on behalf of a potential client. When I asked Falk if he had been making calls about Williams, he was outraged.

"I would *never* do anything like that," he said. "I would never try to convince

an underclassman to leave college early. Someone is giving you bad information. I resent the implication."

He was shouting indignantly into the phone. Lefty must have had it wrong, I thought. It sounded as if Falk hadn't gone anywhere near Williams. Still, just to be sure, I figured I'd call Williams to see if he'd even thought about leaving early. I dialed his apartment and Albert King, his roommate, answered. Buck wasn't there, he said. I asked him if Buck had talked at all about leaving early.

"I think he's still thinking about it," King said.

Now thoroughly confused, I played a hunch. I called Falk's office back. This time, when the secretary answered, I said, "I'm looking for Buck Williams."

"I'm sorry," the secretary said. "He's in with Mr. Falk right now. Can I take a message?"

In later years, whenever I said that I wouldn't trust Falk to tell me where the sun was going to rise, he would ask me why I still "held a grudge for a young agent's mistake." I've always thought the mistake he was referring to was getting caught.

Agents lie. Even agents who aren't terrible guys lie. Tom Ross has been a tennis agent for almost 30 years. I consider him a friend. Once, in explaining to me what he did and why he did it, he shrugged and said, "There are times when, for the good of your client, you have to lie. I don't like doing it, but it comes with the territory."

Some agents do have consciences. But it doesn't stop them from lying. Or breaking the rules. Agents will do whatever they feel they have to do to sign or keep a star player.

That's why nothing being said this summer about agents and their lackeys paying off college football players—or offering to pay them—should be taken seriously. Every agent alive is looking for the next Peyton Manning or LeBron James. If you get a player like that, the way Falk got Michael Jordan, you can

start wearing \$2,000 suits and sending others to do your dirty work for you.

Of course, when players get caught taking payoffs or accepting freebies from bird-dogs sent by high-powered agents, they claim ignorance. They often say they really didn't know they were doing anything wrong or they just wanted enough money to take their girlfriend to the movies. This is as big a fib as Falk saying he'd never go near an underclassman.

Not only do players know the rules, the rules are pounded into their heads. Every college football and basketball team is told during the preseason to run screaming from any stranger who wants to be your new best friend, to accept *nothing* for free from anyone. I once saw Bob Knight threaten a gas station owner to within an inch of his life for giving his players free fuel. The problem is that when players—especially star players—are told the rules, they figure the rules don't apply to them.

The only way to slow down the agent pox on college athletics is for the major pro leagues and the NCAA to work together. Rules should be passed stating that any agent who so much as introduces himself to a college athlete can't negotiate an NBA, NFL or MLB contract for two years. Second offense: five years. Third offense and you're gone forever. And an athlete caught taking any payoff doesn't just get his college in trouble—what price is Reggie Bush paying?—but should be suspended from playing professionally for a year, two or more. The longer the probation, the longer you sit.

Will it stop the agents? No. But it might slow them down.

Buck Williams turned pro that night in 1981 after Falk got a guarantee from the New Jersey Nets that they'd draft him with the No. 3 pick. During that season, Falk and then-boss Donald Dell had been in the Maryland locker room frequently. When I asked Driesell why he let them mingle with his players that way, he said, "If I don't, they'll tell the players that *they* care about them more than I do. I know that's not true, but I can't be sure the players know that's not true."

It's another agent's lie. The list of them is lengthy.



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